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ABSTRACT

This guide presents a new focus, called future options education, for career and college planning for students in the middle grades. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of future options education, describing it as a sustained, comprehensive, age- and stage-appropriate mix of guidance and counseling, with an enhanced curriculum and supplemental programs and activities that provide young adolescents with the knowledge and experiences they need to forge a robust sense of personal resourcefulness. Chapter 2 describes a variety of activities that enable young adolescents and their parents to develop a consciousness about the many positive options available to students after high school. Chapter 3 examines common strategies that assure each student a relationship with a caring adult, and that coordinate the actions and activities of other adults and institutions. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of assessment. Chapter 5 considers the development of a future options plan by discussing what the plan is, why it is needed, when it is developed, how it is developed, and how to get started. Chapter 6 presents information about three middle schools currently practicing future options education. Chapter 7 lists recommendations for organizing a future options education initiative. Chapter 8 looks at changes that have occurred in the economy and society, and suggests that schools failing to move with these trends are schools that fail. Chapter 9 offers a checklist approach for evaluating future options education interventions. (LLL)

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Future Options Education

"Not Another Handbook"

Handbook on How to Help Young People in the Middle-Grades Aspire and Achieve

The Center for Human Resources
Heller Graduate School
Brandeis University
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Prepared for
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
November 1990

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Future Options Education

"NOT ANOTHER HANDBOOK" HANDBOOK ON HOW TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE-GRADES ASPIRE AND ACHIEVE

THE CENTER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES
HELLER GRADUATE SCHOOL
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PREPARED FOR
THE EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION
NOVEMBER 1990

PREFACE

This Guide is written primarily for middle-grades principals, teachers, administrators and education planners. But it also is appropriate for parents, for staff at community agencies, and for business groups, civic groups, and volunteer associations. Regardless of the audience, we want our readers to know that the guardianship of young people is a labor of love that can't be reduced to a step-by-step mechanical process.

This Guide is the culmination of a project of Brandeis University's Center for Human Resources, in partnership with and funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The Clark Foundation has designed a special Middle-Grades Initiative, built upon the tenets of high expectations, high content, and high support. The Foundation asked us to investigate middle-grades strategies that could stimulate young adolescents to pursue higher expectations, whether college, post-high-school training, or skilled jobs after high school graduation. We studied commission reports and other literature, talked with experts, and visited middle-grades schools across the country. We then analyzed and synthesized our findings to make them useful to principals, teachers, planners, parents and community groups.

Our premise was that it is rare to find career and college preparatory interventions that are age- and stage-appropriate for middle-grades youth -- and in particular for "at-risk" youngsters. We found that a mismatch often exists between the organization and curriculum of middle-grades schools, and the intellectual and emotional needs of their students. When it comes to helping young adolescents think about their futures, we found that many school-based and community programs are constrained and unable to offer the high content, high support, and high expectations that the labor force and society of tomorrow will require. On the other hand, our research showed that we need not wait for total "school reform" to begin to address these issues. Important steps can be taken by any school or classroom interested in getting early adolescents to prepare for their futures.

We have not created new lessons here. Rather, we have reorganized and reformulated a number of lessons into a systematic approach. What results is a practical response for people on the front-lines working with youth, illustrated with positive examples of approaches that are working now, and packaged with practical "how to" information.

In a nutshell, we are optimistic from what we have learned. The strategies we present in this publication are appropriate for any school. Variations are happening, day in and day out, in selected places. And while Future Options Education may appear complex, activities based upon its themes can be implemented by any middle-grades school, and integrated into any existing classroom or community setting.

This publication was developed to help simplify the subject, speed the process, spread the word, and stimulate more middle-grades schools to help more adolescents aspire and achieve.

Andrew Hahn
Principal Investigator and Associate Dean
Heller Graduate School
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The Future Options Education Project was developed and directed by **Dr. Andrew Hahn**, Associate Dean and Human Services Research Professor, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University. Of course, a project of this type is always a team affair, so thanks and appreciation are due to:

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The Brandeis staff would like to give special thanks to **Janet Reingold**, President of **Reingold & Associates, Inc.**, who helped us shape this Handbook, and who took the lead in final writing, editing, packaging and publishing. Janet was a colleague in every sense of the word -- without her our collective learning would not be displayed so clearly.

We would also like to thank the members of our energetic advisory board. A special thanks to **Anne Wheelock** who helped to coin the expression "Future Options Education," and to others who sent us materials and good ideas. The members were:

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

> *"Please... not another dreary report telling me how bad things are in the schools! Don't try to peddle me a blueprint for national reform, and don't preach. Talk instead about change within my reach. Give me ideas for local action, tools I can use to improve the way my school -- and my community -- prepare young adolescents for the future."*

Don't worry, we're not about to add to the din of grim statistics and dire warnings on the state of American public education. Extended critiques of "the system" have certainly been covered well in other documents. We want this publication to focus elsewhere.

We won't lecture you on America's crisis of economic competitiveness. You already know that it comes about, in large measure, because of the mismatch between our nation's current supply of human capital and the demands of the 21st century labor market.

And who are we to tell you about the complexities of dealing with students in the middle-grades? You're already challenged daily by their wide-ranging and special needs, the cross-roads they face, and the choices they make that affect their lives' trajectories.

This Handbook has a different focus -- career and college planning for students in the middle-grades. We will explore "career ed," "voc ed," and college exposure, but in a broader and more integrated manner than they customarily are covered.

We've coined a name for our approach: "FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION:"

> FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION symbolizes the strategies, interventions, and attitudes necessary for schools and communities serving middle-grades adolescents, to help them aspire toward and achieve ambitious goals -- especially higher education or training, or quality, skilled jobs.

Drawing upon the experience of middle-grades educators and administrators, this Handbook assembles a fundamental set of principles to guide you in developing a Future Options Education approach:

☐ This Handbook illustrates how front-line practitioners are already implementing strategies that open future vistas for all youth. From these, we will tease out lessons about what works, and why.

☐ This Handbook describes steps that you can take in your school or community, starting today. Some steps are relatively simple, quick, painless, and inexpensive. Others are more ambitious, and can be taken incrementally over time.

☐ This Handbook will give you some new ideas for improving the capacity for self-determination among young adolescents. It is about helping middle-grades students to aspire and achieve by giving them higher education and career options that, in many cases, they didn't know were possible for them.

This Handbook will NOT be foolish enough to suggest "one best approach." We all know that there are tremendous variations among young adolescents, schools and communities. We also know that the support systems needed to help 10-to-15 year-olds control their futures must always be contoured to individual circumstances and local realities.

Future Options Education provides a framework, not a formula; principles, not prescriptions. Future Options Education is not a new "program," but a new combination of approaches and a new context for dealing with young people in the middle-grades.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION?

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT IS "FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION?"

> *"It's a fact: Too many young adolescents set their sights too low, and don't achieve their full potential in school. If they applied themselves, they might be able to obtain skilled jobs after high school. If they really pushed, they might be able to attend college or meaningful vocational training after high school."*

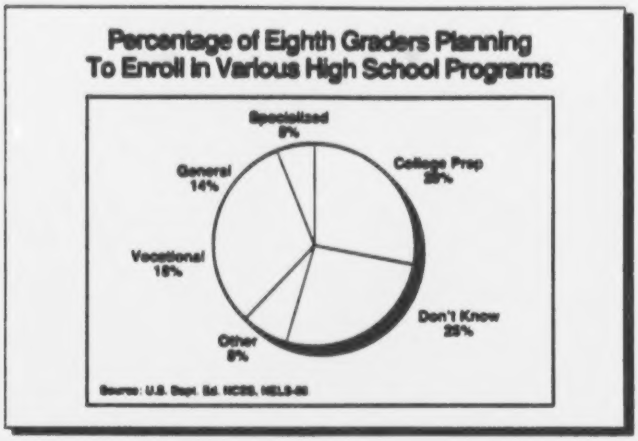
But too often they do neither. They don't like school and they don't understand education's relationship to their futures. They don't know their strengths and capabilities. Some have no idea where they're going. Others think they know, but don't know how to get there.

We learn from the largest sample of American 8th graders ever studied -- 23,000 of them in the National Education Study -- that:

☐ One-half to two-thirds of eighth graders plan on completing college but only 25% plan on taking college preparatory courses. Many aspire, but few know how to get from "here to there."

☐ 25% of eight graders don't know which high school program they will enter. See Chart below.

☐ 64% of eighth graders have never discussed their future high school program with a counselor. Half haven't discussed their high school plans with a teacher and 25% haven't had this discussion with a father.


Percentage of Eighth Graders Planning To Enroll in Various High School Programs

Source: U.S. Dept. Ed. NCES, NELS-88

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION is a strategy to address these issues beginning in the middle-grades.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION symbolizes the approaches, interventions, and attitudes needed to help young adolescents aspire toward and achieve ambitious goals -- especially higher education or training, or quality, skilled jobs after high school.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION is a process designed to assure that young adolescents will not flounder in school because of the turmoil, experimentation and exploration of the middle years.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION encourages students to choose ambitious yet realistic, high-stakes choices affecting their futures.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION responds to the fact that too often, young people are cut off from, rather than connected to, the world that awaits them. Critical information, from negotiating access to higher education, to identifying vocational and employability skills demanded by the changing job market, is usually unavailable or inappropriately presented to young adolescents. And the opportunities for middle-grades students to prepare for the future by testing themselves and developing a sense of personal resourcefulness are few and far between.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION is based upon a premise that the middle-grades years are not too early for students to start exploring post-high school options, or to gain early work experience. Indeed, the hope is that students who avail themselves of these options will gain experience that can lead to greater achievement in school and throughout life.

Operationally, FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION is a shorthand phrase representing:

☐ A sustained, comprehensive, age-and stage-appropriate mix of guidance and counseling;

☐ Enhanced curricula, supplemental programs and activities that provide young adolescents with the knowledge and experiences they need to forge a robust sense of personal resourcefulness;

☐ The confidence and skills they need to identify and explore a variety of life choices.

WHERE DOES THE CONCEPT COME FROM?

For a number of years, professionals in education, human service, and other fields have recognized the existence of an untapped resource of talent among young people whose environments have prevented them from achieving their full potential. The key question was, "How do we get these students to believe that, if they channel their energies into academic performance, there are attractive rewards awaiting them?"

From this question evolved activities that highlighted those rewards and the vehicles through which students could achieve them. The need to make students aware of their post-high-school options evolved in the early 1980s through efforts to address the problem of declining minority enrollments in higher education.

For example, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators stated, "...the disproportionate growth and poverty rate of minority populations and the declining enrollments of colleges and universities" underscore the importance of early awareness and early planning of post-secondary education."

College officials seeking to recruit under-represented populations discovered that many students had not prepared for post-secondary education or training because they were unaware of opportunities or of the availability of financial aid. As a result, high school level programs promoting early awareness of post-secondary education and training options began to proliferate.

Initially, these "Higher Education Awareness" activities targeted tenth and eleventh grade students. Volunteers from the higher education community organized and conducted activities held in high school and community settings -- practice SAT tests, test preparation workshops, college fairs, and workshops on college admission and financial aid processes. High school counselors assisted in planning activities and identifying students to participate.

Over time, people realized that these activities would have greater impact if they reached students in earlier grades, and they began shifting attention to middle-grades students. With this expansion came changes in content and design that acknowledged differences in the motivation, informational needs, and developmental stages of younger adolescents. As a result, a variety of techniques are now being tried to encourage young adolescents to stay in school, and to view the middle-grades as a key step toward post-secondary education or training.

A study of middle school students in a mid-west consortium of schools reveals:

- ☐ 74% are learning very little about people's work activities in the next century.
- ☐ Approximately one third have little knowledge of the world-of-work in their communities, have not acquired knowledge about different occupations and the changing male/female roles, see little connection between school activities and future work plans, and are learning very little about how to select a career.
- ☐ 51% are learning very little about the vocational courses offered in their high school.

Thus, in this handbook, we acknowledge that many students will choose not to pursue further education or formal training after high school, but instead would like to obtain a "good job." Hence, in addition to the focus on college or vocational training found among "Early Education Awareness" programs, we have added awareness of jobs that are rewarding and that offer opportunities for further training and advancement.

Adding this "jobs" focus is not as simple as it sounds. What we "know" often doesn't apply. We know a great deal about preparing older teenagers (age 16-21) for the world of work and for post-secondary education and training. We have made great strides in developing "school-to-work transition" models, "pre-employment preparation" programs, and "work-experience" opportunities for *high school* students. However, we have yet to adequately translate lessons from programs for older adolescents into a form valuable to students in the middle-grades. Rather, what usually happens is a "dumbed-down" version of a high school program, ill-suited for young adolescents.

To provide effective FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION in the middle-grades, principals, teachers, and youth program designers will need to do some "adaptation." Career education, post-high-school training, and higher education exposure and activities will need to be made age- and stage-appropriate. Lessons learned from thousands of youth programs at the high school level, and from research on learning among disadvantaged students, must be merged to address the needs of young adolescents.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION TENETS:

> *"So, now we have an idea of what Future Options Education is. That's nice. But if we really get down to it, what should we be doing? What are the key philosophies upon which we should base Future Options Education in our school?"*

What we describe as Future Options Education is a support structure, or "scaffolding," that combines strength with flexibility and is suitable for young adolescents. It is based on a number of key premises and principles:

☐ **High Expectations**

Future Options Education encompasses standards and general belief that all students can succeed, and should pursue ambitious goals such as college and skilled jobs;

☐ **High Content**

Future Options Education calls for activities providing breadth and depth of exposure, regarding higher education and career options and opportunities;

☐ **High Support**

Future Options Education requires tough, persistent, close monitoring by, and support from knowledgeable, caring adults and institutions: parents, schools, peers, community resources, business leaders, and others.

At the same time, there are no hard and fast rules regarding what "real" Future Options Education is. Each school's approach and methods will vary.

If you've got an appetite for educational fast food -- pre-cooked, neatly packaged, consume-on-the-run prescriptive advice -- you'll have to look elsewhere. Few of the program models we present can or should be replicated using a "cookie-cutter" approach.

HOW DO I KNOW WHERE TO START? A FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION SCAN FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

You are probably already doing many things that constitute elements of Future Options Education, and there is certainly no need to reinvent the wheel. Scan your school and your community, assess which elements you may already have in place, and then build on these elements, to link them together more cohesively, and fill in the missing pieces. Treat this checklist as an instrument of self-assessment -- a scanning and planning tool.

Following is a Future Options Education scanning tool to help you answer these questions:

☐ Are we doing future options education, or parts of it already? ("Do we have the right pieces?")

☐ Do we have a quality initiative? ("Is it high content, high expectations, high support?")

☐ Is it working? ("Are students benefitting from the Future Options efforts?")

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION SCAN

Review the following questions and answer them for your school and your community:

Scanning For "High Expectations"

- ☐ Do we help students identify their personal strengths, talents, interests, weaknesses, and barriers?
- ☐ Do we offer a variety of activities that enable students to discover and enhance their skills and pursue their interests to achieve their goals?
- ☐ Does our school and our community help students relate their skills and interests to future opportunities in the labor market?
- ☐ Do we show students how they can overcome weaknesses and barriers?
- ☐ Do we encourage students to consider post-secondary education, training, and/or skilled jobs to be attainable post-high-school goals?
- ☐ Do we prepare each student to choose and enter a high school program that maximizes his/her chances of success.

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 of this Handbook will help you design Future Options Education activities that establish high expectations.

Scanning For "High Content"

- ☐ Does our school have activities that introduce students to the world of work?
- ☐ Does our school have activities that show the relationship between post-secondary education or training and the ability to get an attractive job after high school?
- ☐ Does our school have activities that introduce some key realities of post-secondary education or training?
- ☐ Does our school provide activities that help students and their families investigate ways to pay for education or training after high school?
- ☐ Does our school offer activities that keep the door open for attractive future options?
- ☐ Are our academic subjects related to each other, and to the realities of students' current lives and the broader world?

☐ Do we regularly show our students the relationships between middle-grades education, secondary school education, vocational education, post-secondary education, and a better future?

☐ Do we show our students and their parents how academic and personal choices made during the middle-grades and high school years can broaden or limit later options?

Chapters 2 and 6 of this Handbook will help you develop Future Options Education activities with high content.

Scanning For "High Support"

☐ Do we provide personalized adult attention through initiatives that involve parents, and provide advisors and mentors for our students?

☐ Do we help our students and their families assess and recognize their strengths and capabilities?

☐ Do we help our students develop a future options plan to help chart their directions and provide challenging goals?

☐ Is each of our students linked with a caring, knowledgeable adult who, for as long as possible, oversees the provision of Future Options activities and assists the student with developing and achieving personal goals?

Chapter 3 of this Handbook will help you develop Future Options Education activities that incorporate high support.

Scanning For Sound Future Options Education Management

☐ Does our school have the infrastructure in place to approach the elements of Future Options Education as a system, and to organize and manage the system?

☐ Have we reached out to other community and family resources to ensure the involvement and participation of other service providers and supporters?

☐ Do we have a system in place to help us monitor our progress and assess our results?

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of this Handbook will help you develop a Future Options Education management system and infrastructure.

GETTING STARTED

Obviously, it is neither practical nor recommended that these elements be put into place all at once. Each school and each community must start with the basic steps that they can realistically implement with minimal resources and time. These are the "core" of Future Options Education. They involve:

- ☐ Informing each middle-grades student and his/her parent(s) about the student's potential to pursue ambitious post-high school options -- including skilled jobs, college, and/or vocational training; and
- ☐ Spurring them on to pursue those options.

But these steps should be just that -- steps. They should be part of a larger stairway that leads somewhere -- part of a more comprehensive Future Options Education initiative. Certainly, you can implement many of the keystone concepts, and adapt many program ideas and practical approaches pulled together in this guide, but doing so will require some creativity on your part. Getting started is a matter of top-level political will, bottom-up creativity, collaborative resourcefulness of local change-agents, and plain hard work.

BUILDING TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Over the long run, schools can move toward a model that ties together the right messages, resources, curricula, and support from the home, the school and the community. An ideal Future Options Education initiative is more than a few add-on programs. Separate interventions -- one or two quick workshops, weekly group counseling, stimulating guest speakers, etc. -- may help, but they won't have the significant, long-term effect needed. The fact is that students need to hear consistent, ongoing, developmentally appropriate messages that crosscut their activities as they move through each day.

A comprehensive Future Options Education initiative should inspire students in the middle-grades to consider what they can achieve after high school if they really apply themselves. It should give students a sense of hope and ambition for the future, and "High Expectations for their personal achievement.

Future Options Education also recognizes that many students can't rise to "High Expectations" alone. They need adult help. Hence, the initiative should assure "High Support" -- personal adult help.

One aspect of the "High Content" philosophy says that students should understand why they are being called upon to do something. We're telling them during the middle-grades years that they should pay attention to issues that will become "current" six years later. A comprehensive Future Options Education initiative should help students relate the present to the future by helping them see how middle school is important to their future options, and helping students set and achieve ambitious goals.

Pick and choose from among the concepts we present. Experiment. Mix and match, adapting the examples we provide so that they fit your particular circumstances. Think of this guide less as a blueprint to be rigidly followed than as a catalog of ideas you can browse through and adapt to your special needs.

CHAPTER 2

THE CORE OF FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION

CHAPTER 2:

THE CORE OF FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION:

HELPING MIDDLE-GRADES STUDENTS VIEW COLLEGE, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, OR SKILLED JOBS AS VIABLE OPTIONS

> *"But isn't it too early to start teaching middle graders about post-secondary education and their life's career paths? After all, they are barely into their teens! We've already pushed them to grow up too fast. Now you come along and say they should be thinking careers and college. Next thing you know, we'll be talking about neo-natal prep schools! Lighten up!"*

The plain truth is that CONTENT is not the issue. Nor is the issue that middle graders are young. It's not too early to begin a Future Options Education program.

Rather, the issue is that information, materials, programs and approaches must be made age- and stage-appropriate. We must revise our thinking! We must also avoid taking high-school-level approaches and "dumbing them down" to fit young adolescents.

And it's not just students who need information. Parents need it too!

Chapter 2 describes a variety of horizon-broadening activities that enable young adolescents and their parents to develop a "consciousness" about the many positive options available to students after high school.

By "consciousness," we mean that each middle-grades student and his/her parent(s) will incorporate into their beliefs the idea that education, training, or a good job beyond high school represent necessary and realistic options for the student.

It means preparing both the student and his/her parent(s) to WANT to see one or more of these options happen, and BELIEVE that the student will benefit from them and can pursue them successfully. Equally important, it means showing students and parents the steps necessary to achieve their goals.

To help spread the word about the need for interventions to be age- and stage-appropriate for young adolescents, we have tried to include appropriate illustrative examples. However, a word of caution is in order. Generally, these types of programs have an active life of several years. Often, they evolve, change, expand, and flourish; but sometimes they fail or go out of business altogether. Therefore, the examples included here are not necessarily the best in their league, but rather were selected as illustrations of portions of Future Options Education that already exist somewhere. The challenge is to develop local adaptations, to weave the pieces into a more comprehensive "whole," and to expand the numbers of schools that take advantage of these practices.

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO MIDDLE-GRADES STUDENTS WANT?

In planning future options activities for young adolescents, their developmental needs must be considered. These include the need for:

- ☐ Activity-based experiences;
- ☐ Self-exploration;
- ☐ Adult reinforcement; and
- ☐ A sense of belonging to a group.

Research on future options activities that interest middle-grades students showed that young people who considered themselves college-bound were willing to participate in a broad array of activities, including those traditionally offered to eleventh and twelfth graders.

On the other hand, students who identified themselves as vocation-or employment-bound were less interested in the full array of activities. They showed less interest in activities involving reading material on college and financial aid, seeking information and advice from teachers and counselors, and special events such as college fairs and career days. On the other hand, vocation-bound students did express willingness to use computerized guidance programs and videos to learn more about post-high-school opportunities.

Translating this information into practical activities, we find six Future Options Education topic areas, each of which will be discussed in more detail in this Chapter:

1. Activities that introduce students to the world of work;

2. Activities that show the relationship between post-secondary education or training, and the ability to get an attractive job after high school;

3. Activities that introduce some key realities of post-secondary education or training;

4. Activities that investigate ways to pay for education or training after high school;

5. Prerequisites: activities that keep the door open for future options;

6. Sources of help.

ACTIVITIES THAT INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO THE WORLD OF WORK

For young adolescents to pursue ambitious yet realistic career options, they need information about themselves and the labor market. Middle-grades schools can help students consider these issues through regular curricula and/or special programs.

Future Options Education helps students explore and analyze their interests. They discuss their attitudes and values, and consider how these have been influenced. They investigate their unique strengths, skills, and aptitudes.

Young adolescents need to know things about themselves:

☐ Their dreams and aspirations, and the barriers that may impede achievement of their goals.
☐ Their interests, and how their interests differ from those of their friends, parents, family.
☐ Their attitudes and values, and how these are influenced.
☐ Their unique strengths, skills, and aptitudes.
☐ Their decision-making processes.

There are many ways to gather this information. In the classroom, self-exploration issues can be handled in a number of ways, including (to name just a few):

☐ Interest inventories
☐ Values clarification activities
☐ Personality inventories
☐ Counseling
☐ Role playing
☐ Group discussions
☐ Films

The list is limited only by the creativity of the teacher.

Young adolescents also need to know about the world of work. Future Options activities also expose students to the great variety of jobs and careers available, and to the connections between schoolwork and adequate preparation for those jobs. These activities may convey information such as:

☐ Why people work
☐ The great variety of jobs and careers available, particularly those in growth areas, their associated demands and satisfactions, and the education level, pre-requisite skills and preparation required for them
☐ The rapidly changing economy and labor force dynamics
☐ Barriers to full participation, and ways they may be overcome.
☐ Transferable skills young people have now that may apply to different jobs.
☐ The connection between schoolwork during the middle-grades, and adequate preparation for jobs.
☐ High school choices and their implications;
☐ How people get jobs and how they keep or lose them.
☐ Alternative ways people can get training or education needed for different jobs.

There are many ways to impart this information, in both school and community settings. Approaches may include:

- ☐ Regular classroom activities
- ☐ Career-oriented curricula
- ☐ Career and post-secondary education information centers
- ☐ Partnerships with community-based organizations
- ☐ Booklets
- ☐ Career fairs
- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Computers

Some cautions are in order. On the other hand, we also offer several cautions to those considering middle-grades career education efforts:

- ☐ In general, programs whose sole purpose is to provide information may be too passive for middle graders. In our national search, we found too many examples of schools that offered very boring, paper-based models ("Here. Read this pamphlet about jobs in service industries.")

- ☐ Much of the career information available to middle-grades youth appears to be nothing more than "watered down high school stuff" ("Here. Read this dumbed-down pamphlet about jobs in service industries."). Schools may need to develop some original materials, or search hard for age- and stage- appropriate ones.

- ☐ Middle-grades educators need to remind themselves that students do not need to choose a career during their middle-grades years, nor do they need to know how to handle a job interview. Students do not need to pursue a middle-grades course of study based on a specific occupation.

In other words, middle-grades students DO need to get a "ballpark" notion of occupations, skill requirements, earnings potential, and working conditions for various jobs. They DO need very basic information about the relationship of careers and lifestyles, personal time, and satisfaction. They DO need horizon-broadening information that shows, for example, that within a hospital, there are more jobs than doctor, nurse, and orderly. They do NOT need to begin a rigid career track toward becoming an occupational therapist.

What Can You Do Now? Ideas For Teachers and Principals:

- Middle-grades students can participate in activities showing them how and where to research information about jobs.

- Guest speakers from local businesses, government agencies, schools, and community-based organizations can often provide interesting presentations about job opportunities.

- There are plenty of tools available to help students explore the labor market. For example, audio-visual materials abound on career-related subjects.

- Curricula can be altered to take on a Future Options emphasis.

Teachers' Resource: A major resource for teachers interested in supplementing curriculum with materials that encourage students to learn about the American economic system is the Joint Council on Economic Education. They produce audio-visuals, instructional TV, CAI material and other resources to teach about the stock market, the economics of various employment sectors, and information about careers and jobs. Joint Council on Economic Education, New York, New York.

Teachers' Resource: Want to know what works in the academic subjects in the middle-grades? Check out an extremely useful publication, Promising Practices in Major Academic Subjects in the Middle Grades, by Joyce Epstein and Karen Salina, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, The John Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218 (Phone 301 338-7570), May 1990, This publication pulls together an enormous amount of information about exciting curricula and program models. A section on social studies touches on some of the themes of future options education. The Hopkins guide includes a helpful discussion of the pros and cons of "pull-out" programs. If future options programs pull students out of the classroom, educators may be fixing one problem but creating another!

Teachers' Resource: FUTURES, a new PBS Series, is being produced by the Los Angeles based Foundation in Science and Eduction and hosted by famed mathematics teacher, Jaime Escalante. The 12 part series, airing in the fall 1990, is organized around career sectors -- agriculture, aircraft design and flight, architecture, automotive design, cartography, fashion, hydro-engineering, space, optics, sound engineering, sports, and statistics. Teacher materials are available to help promote broad applications of mathematics and to acquaint students with various professional and work environments.

Teachers' Resource: You can choose from many different computerized systems that help young people explore careers. One example, the Career Information System (C.I.S.) is especially worth looking at, and is described in Deborah Block's book, Reducing The Risk: Using Career Information With At-Risk Youth (1988. Eugene, Oregon: Career Information System. University of Oregon) This publication describes a number of models, plus "tips" and "tools."

PROGRAM IDEAS:

Chicago Careers For Youth

Corporate and civic leaders have joined with state and local educators to transform the way that the Chicago Public Schools prepare students for their working lives. In this public/private partnership, role models from the business world interact directly with all students in grades six through twelve. Among the activities in this model that are particularly appropriate to young people in the middle-grades are:

Career Awareness: In the sixth grade, students are visited by "role models" representing a number of occupational clusters. They view video-tapes describing the range of occupations available within those clusters. Teachers have instructional materials available for follow-up. In the seventh grade, students are visited by volunteers representing additional occupational clusters. Chicago Careers for Youth is also developing modules that will be appropriate for use with students in the early grades. Awareness activities are coordinated with academic courses emphasizing the relationships between schoolwork and occupations.

Career Exploration: At the end of the seventh grade, each student selects a cluster of particular interest, and is "entered" into a computerized network for that cluster. This enables the student to access information on high schools -- and later on community colleges, trade schools, and universities -- to be sent to the student's home. The network tie-in also provides information on interesting accomplishments and advances in the cluster, as well as internships, co-op programs, and job opportunities.

In the eighth grade, each student attends a half-day program introducing the cluster of his/her choice. Role models discuss their careers, and exhibits show the human needs served by the cluster. Representatives from the cluster are present to provide information about programs and facilities.

For more information about Chicago Careers For Youth, contact John P. Gnaedinger, Chairman, STS Consultants Ltd., 111 Pfingston Rd., Northbrook, Illinois 60062.

Source: Letter from John Gnaedinger to the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, June 29, 1990.

Dreamquest: South Carolina's Middle-Grades Curriculum Focused on a Future Career in the Professions

Facing a projected shortage of minority teachers, the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment (SCCTR) has developed a model curriculum to stimulate and inform middle-grades students about post-secondary education, and about the teaching profession.

Dreamquest/The Pro Team Experience is a middle-grades curriculum designed to help students explore teaching and a professional future. The primary goal is for students to develop a professional attitude about life by developing a stronger sense of self and by acquiring insights into working cooperatively with others. The youth move through a series of learning activities in self-exploration, goal setting, and the teaching experience. With teacher supervision, students conduct structured classroom observations and discuss what they learn. They prepare lessons to teach to peers or elementary school students. After their teaching experience, the teachers help them process what they have learned.

The curriculum is comprised of four units that help students learn who they are, help them work in groups (even with people they don't like), help them learn what it means to help others, and help them dream, particularly about attending college. This curriculum can be used as a nine week exploratory course or as an eight month extra-curricular club or activity.

For further information, contact: John Norton, Project Director, South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment, Winthrop College, The Canterbury House, Rock Hill, SC 29733, (803) 323-4032.

Source: Adapted from Dreamquest: The Pro Team Experience, Pilot Edition, Fall 1989; and "Project Summary" Clark Foundation, 11/16/89.

Bank Street College's Middle School Project
Thinking About Programs -- A Framework for Developmentally Appropriate, Career-Related Activities For The Middle-Grades

Bank Street College's Middle School Project is a collaboration between the College, the New York City Partnership, and the New York Chamber of Commerce. It addresses the critical link between schools and employment, an issue of particular importance to at-risk students who often lack role models in the work world.

In five middle schools in five districts of New York City, Bank Street is helping to infuse a developmentally appropriate sequence of career-related activities into a variety of academic subjects including language arts, social studies, math, and science. Teachers and Bank Street staff have begun to expand the mandated curriculum in each subject to include an emphasis on students' attitudes and values about work. Doing so has entailed exploration into students' awareness of their skills, interests, and experiences in relation to work. Curricula have been designed specifically to involve students in decision-making and problem-solving processes -- ones in which teachers help students relate their own lives to the subjects at hand.

Ongoing staff training and curriculum development are integral to the project. Through staff development, teachers are encouraged to introduce into their classrooms greater dialogue between students and themselves, and to provide more attention to the links between subject matter and students' thoughts and personal experiences. Each program is an organic collaboration between and among schools, community- based organizations, the private-sector, and the College. Careful match-ups are made to assure congruence between the needs of schools and the resources of business.

As a result of such collaboration, several projects were successfully implemented in which business people worked directly with staff and students. These included the establishment of a school store, a hands-on Earth Science Program, and a mock court. Another initiative involved business people working with school administrators to undertake a management study of how a school was run. The goal of this project was to enable staff to develop a plan to improve the school's basic operation.

For more information, contact Ken Jewell, Director, Middle School Project, Bank Street College, 610 West 112th Street, New York, NY 10025, Telephone (212) 222-6700 ext.420.

Source: Middle School Project, Bank Street College of Education.

If we move outside the classroom, even more possibilities open up. There are career clubs, career days, and field trips to name but a few. Whether simple or sophisticated, they can offer interesting variations on the Future Options theme.

If we get more ambitious and leave the school building, still more opportunities present themselves. Although middle-grades students are usually too young to be employed in traditional jobs, this does not mean that hands-on, world-of-work "experiences" can't be provided.

Following are some program descriptions and selected examples to illustrate their application to Future Options Education for middle-grades youth:

Job Shadowing Models:

These approaches enable students to spend some time on the job with an adult worker observing his/her "typical day" and the surrounding work environment, and assisting with a task or two. Job shadowing is also a good way to help teachers keep current on workplace needs.

Job Shadowing Isn't Only For Students
Teachers Need To Keep Up-To-Date Too

The Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville have forged a partnership among three middle schools and a downtown business group, the Third Century. Under the auspices of Third Century, a group of teachers from the three project schools were divided into three groups to "shadow" professionals in law, banking, and architecture. The purpose was to help teachers to convey to their students the most up-to-date and exciting information about these careers. Teachers were surprised that the professions had such high expectations of their employees and they were interested in the emphasis placed on communication and problem solving skills. Armed with these new insights, the teachers reinforced these skills when they returned to the classroom.

Enriched (And Monitored) Work Experience Models:

This category includes internships, work teams, supervised crew-work, and other variations on jobs appropriate for young adolescents. To be considered "enriched," these programs have classroom components that are tied to the work experience. They feature opportunities for students to gain work experience, to be exposed to adult supervisors and models in a work situation, and to relate their academic learning to the world of work.

Pre-Employment/Work Maturity Models:

These approaches introduce young people to the competencies needed to get and retain a quality job. Activities may include world-of-work awareness, basic labor market knowledge, and general occupational information. They may involve elementary career education and decision-making. They may also (indirectly) impart positive work habits, attitudes, and behaviors (punctuality, regular attendance, getting along with and working well with others, etc.) by showing students how school expectations relate to employer expectations.

Curricula for these programs are available from job training programs found around the country. Many agencies that operate programs with funds from the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), for example, have recently begun redirecting their attention to middle-grades students.

Again, we emphasize the need for age- and stage-appropriate activities. A 13-year-old adolescent should not be practicing job interviewing skills since s/he will not have a chance to apply those skills for several years.

Summer Youth Employment Models, or Year-Round Models:

These may include special summer (or summer and part-time and holiday) employment opportunities for middle-grades youth, particularly those who are 14 or older. Usually government funded, but not always, these opportunities are often combined with remedial basic skills education.

Pre-Apprenticeship Skills Training:

These approaches have the flavor of a short-term "pre-apprenticeship." They expose middle-grades students to certain skilled crafts, and demonstrate the rewards for obtaining journey-level skills in a trade or craft. With young adolescents, close monitoring and supervision is essential, and the students must be shown that the rewards for such positions are worth the special effort.

"How Things Work"
Boston Adolescents Learn About Building Trades

At the Martin Luther King School in Boston's Dorchester section, fifty sixth graders are participating in a three-year program sponsored by Boston developer, Spaulding and Slye, and the city's Redevelopment Authority. In this program, students study David Macauley's best-selling book, How Things Work, which describes the operational dynamics of various machinery, from jet airplanes to computers. The program is designed to spur the interest of minority youngsters in all of the various jobs associated with the building trades. The class follows the construction of a 1.5 million square foot office project, visiting the site, meeting those who contribute their skills, from the architect to the crane operator, and receiving instruction on how elevators work.

Community and Neighborhood Service Models:

These activities include individual voluntary service and youth-guided services. Young people get experience not only as workers but as citizens. Service programs not only expose young people to the adult world, but give them a sense of the obligations of citizenship in building a more caring, compassionate and competent society. The experience of service to the community is an element perhaps as important as schooling and work.

Magic Me: A Baltimore, Maryland Program For Youth Community Service

Magic Me motivates at-risk youth by engaging them in service to the elderly, mentally retarded and handicapped. Through weekly community service projects, Magic Me provides a vehicle for students to effect a positive change in their lives and in the lives of others.

Magic Me operates in ten public middle schools, and five private middle schools in Baltimore. Ideally, students become involved in the sixth grade and continue through the eighth grade. Every week, students visit a nursing home, League for the Handicapped, or Association for Retarded Citizens where they develop a personal relationship with a client. Partners participate in weekly activities which include recreation, physical fitness, tutoring, and field trips such as sailing aboard a traditional schooner or camping with Outward Bound.

Students meet monthly at their school with their Magic Me leader to discuss and reflect upon their experiences and the meaning of service in their lives. These reflection sessions include workshops on life-skills, leadership development, and career development.

As a core component of the Magic Me program, middle-grades students explore career interests and chart academic courses to meet those interests while performing community service.

Year One allows the student to broadly examine many different kinds of careers. Students participate in an interest survey, and are given the opportunity to discuss careers with professionals within the health care field.

During Year Two, students' interests are surveyed again to determine any changes that have occurred. They are encouraged to begin narrowing different job options. They explore job options, salary ranges, and extra-curricular needs. They are also given the opportunity to shadow professionals during the school year.

Students' third year helps them consider educational and other choices they must make if they are to pursue the general career direction of their interests. Students investigate the direction they have chosen, and analyze its viability as a career ten years from now. They decide whether the option they've chosen will be a "good one" in the future, and investigate other related options. Most importantly, they investigate available high schools. They are given help in choosing and applying for high schools that will meet their career needs.

Although the students are young and are far from actually making a permanent career choice, they are taught, through service experience, that they need to begin to make choices for themselves. They learn that the process of choosing a high school is very important, and that they must consider their future options during the middle-grades.

For more information, contact: Kathy Levin, Magic Me, 611 Park Avenue, Suite 6, Baltimore, Maryland 21201, (301) 837-0900.
Source: Information packet provided by Magic Me.

Youth As Resources In Three Indiana Cities

Funded by the Lilly Endowment since 1987, and developed by the National Crime Prevention Council, Youth As Resources programs are based in three Indiana cities. More than 1,500 preteens and teens have completed over 200 projects including plays for elementary school students on what it means to be a teen mother, cleanups of entire neighborhoods, construction of housing for low-income families, outings for children in a battered women's shelter, and mentoring of students in foster care. The young people involved are a diverse group, ranging from probationers to honor students. They form partnerships with adults to tackle any social issue that concerns the community, from crime and drug abuse to illiteracy, hunger, and child abuse. Young people have cleaned up senior citizens' yards, built a playground for a day care center, worked with high school dropouts to encourage teens to graduate, produced public service advertisements, performed plays on drug abuse, published a neighborhood newsletter, and tutored younger children.

For more information, contact: National Crime Prevention Council, 1700 K Street N.W., Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 466-6272.

Source: Adapted from National Crime Prevention Council Annual Report, October 1, 1988 to September 30, 1989, pp. 14-15.

Youth In Service at Westminster West Middle-grades

In Maryland, the Westminster West Middle grades has teamed up with the County Council on Aging to initiate a community service project called the Youth In Service Program. The community service project aims to provide youngsters with the opportunity to learn about various aspects of the aging process and, by raising their consciousness regarding the elderly, to develop an interest in doing volunteer work in local nursing homes.

For further information, contact: John McLain and Thomas Miller, Westminster West Middle grades, 60 Monroe Street, Westminster, MD 21157. Adapted from NMSA Conference Program, 1989, Toronto, Ontario.

The Early Adolescent Helper Program: Youth in Community Service Throughout The United States

The Early Adolescent Helper Program operates throughout the United States, training and placing student volunteers from junior high and middle-grades in senior centers, child care, latchkey, and Head Start programs.

The Helper program is a collaborative effort between the school and the community placement agencies. Most programs are coordinated through the school which recruits and trains students, selects and supports volunteer work sites, and schedules helpers' work. Community agency personnel supervise student helpers and help them to understand their roles. Weekly seminars with an adult leader (usually a teacher or guidance counselor) actively engage the helpers in sharing and reflecting upon their experiences and in discussing their problems and successes.

As a result of program participation, schools note increased student motivation and involvement as well as new classroom opportunities for inter-disciplinary learning. Community agencies receive the students' help in performing needed tasks. Finally, the students themselves have a chance to develop meaningful relationships with people of different ages and backgrounds, to test new skills, to see tangible outcomes, and to develop a sense of competence. As one student put it: "Being a helper means being there when someone needs you."

The Helper program's central office provides assistance with organizing and implementing the program, including training for staff to become program leaders.

For more information, contact: Joan G. Schine, Director, Early Adolescent Helper Program, Center for Advanced Study in Education, City University of New York, 25 West 43rd Street, Room 612N, New York, NY 10036, (212) 642-2947.

Source: Information materials provided by the Early Adolescent Helper Program.

A Tutor Instead of a Dropout: The Valued Youth Partnership Program in San Antonio, Texas

The Valued Youth Partnership Program is a five-year-old initiative combining dropout-prevention with community service. It is targeted to potential middle-grades dropouts. The program hires the middle graders at minimum wage to serve as tutors of elementary school children. Student-tutors work four to eight hours a week and take a class on tutoring, for credit. The young people also go on field trips which expose them to economic and cultural opportunities in their community. It enhances the potential of vulnerable youth by showing them that high expectations can be met.

For more information, contact: STREAMS, Youth Service America, 1319 F Street N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20004, (202) 783-8855.

Source: Adapted from STREAMS (4/89) Newsletter.

Youth Entrepreneurship Models:

These may include approaches such as Junior Achievement and those promoted by the Joint Council for Economic Education. They give young people experience in and understanding of the business world. They provide hands-on experience in market research, developing a product or service, marketing and advertising to promote consumer interest, and managing the business venture. These models often teach lessons in basic economics, the functioning of the market place, and business management practices.

Entrepreneurship For Middle-Grades Students: Cobb and Fulton Counties, Georgia

Middle-grades students in Cobb and Fulton Counties are taking an entrepreneurship course with an opportunity to "try out" their business ideas under the watchful eye of business advisors. "The course examines innovation surges in the economy and spotlights the emergence of great American industries. Concept development encompasses the stock market, basic economics, and the tools of entrepreneurship. Students take market surveys and develop business plans, working with advisors such as bankers, attorneys, accountants and insurance agents. Prototypes are developed, and an idea is produced, advertised and marketing among students. Business math includes a profit and loss statement following sales. Economic knowledge is applied to personal business success and compared on national and global scales."

For more information, contact: Glenda Wills, Cobb County Schools, 541 Glover Street, Marietta, GA 30060.

Source: National Middle Schools Association Conference (Toronto) 1989.

ACTIVITIES THAT SHOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING, AND THE ABILITY TO GET AN ATTRACTIVE JOB

This aspect of Future Options Education relates information about occupations to the benefits those occupations afford, and to the educational preparation or training they require. It considers issues such as:

☐ The myths and realities of acquiring wealth and moving up the economic ladder.

☐ Earnings potential and working conditions for various jobs.

☐ The relationship of careers and lifestyles, personal time, self-esteem and satisfaction.

☐ The types of jobs one can qualify for with:

-- less than a 12th-grade education
-- a high school diploma
-- post-high-school vocational training
-- post-high-school proprietary school training
-- apprenticeships
-- an associates-degree
-- a bachelors-degree
-- a graduate-degree

Students and parents learn that, in today's society, most jobs paying enough to afford an "attractive" lifestyle require some education or training beyond high school. This training or education may not have to be provided by an educational institution -- it may be offered by an employer. But regardless of source, post-high-school learning is becoming a necessity.

For many parents, the need for training or education beyond high school is a new concept --representing a significant change from the workforce they entered when manufacturing jobs were plentiful, and simple hard work often paid enough to support a family comfortably. They must let go of the commonly held misconception that "A person can make just as much money with a high school diploma as s/he can with college or additional training."

This aspect of Future Options Education also includes information about the payoffs of post-secondary education or training in dollar terms over a lifetime. For example, many parents may be unaware that college graduates typically earn hundreds of thousands more dollars during a lifetime than someone who doesn't go to college. Although not quite as impressive, post-high-school vocational training also produces significantly higher earnings than can be achieved by somebody who stops school at 12th grade (or earlier).

These activities consider jobs of the future, and the importance of education and training as a prerequisite for the majority of them. Students and parents receive information about types of college and vocational training programs, the differences between degree and certificate programs, and between liberal arts education and career training. The general criteria to be considered in choosing a school or program, admissions requirements, and admissions processes are also described.

In addition, these activities repeatedly expose middle-grades students to people with whom they can identify who have benefitted from education or training after high school. Students hear from, and spend time with, graduates of post-high-school education and training programs (especially individuals from backgrounds similar to theirs), and learn how those individuals have overcome obstacles and achieved educational goals.

What Can You Do Now? Ideas For Teachers and Principals:

Implementing this aspect of Future Options Education does not have to be an expensive proposition.

- Workshops may be conducted by volunteers from area colleges, community colleges, proprietary schools, trade unions and businesses (preferably adults from backgrounds similar to those of the students to whom they are speaking). Graduates of the same middle-grades school who have "moved on" make especially good presenters.

- Volunteers may conduct exercises that actively engage students in thinking about the relationship between their future dreams and post-secondary education or training. They may share personal experiences -- what kinds of families they came from, how they did in the middle-grades, what influenced their decision-making, and how they overcame obstacles to achieve their present positions.

- Classroom teachers can share their educational experiences and by talking informally with students about plans for further education or training; teachers can, over time, successfully cultivate the notion of post-secondary education or training as realistic goals. Because teachers see students daily and have concrete knowledge of students' individual strengths, teachers can be especially effective advisors regarding the courses students need to take to prepare for education or training after high school. Such advice can be conveyed to students alone or, preferably, in conferences with students and their parents.

- Teachers or counselors can convene weekly group guidance sessions. These sessions are incorporated into a classroom or social studies session, and are often team-taught by a teacher and a guidance counselor. Sessions explore personal values and goals, include career interests inventories, and encourage discussions of future options. Students have homework assignments on these topics to reinforce learning and serve as the basis for additional discussion.

Teachers' Tips: The most successful workshops are those with presenters who quickly establish rapport with students, and those in which students have plenty of opportunity to interact with the volunteer and each other. Effective workshops usually include handouts with information on the courses students need in the middle-grades and high school.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

Kosciuszko Middle School's Career Linking Pilot Project

The Career Linking pilot project of the Kosciuszko Middle School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin contains most of the elements described in this Guide. Sixth and eighth grade student activities began with an introduction to a logo contest which encouraged identification with Career Linking (or future options education). The student logos were then shown at a parents conference. At that time, parent volunteers were recruited. Next, students were invited to a tour of a local university where presentations on the "fun" in science and life on campus were delivered. This was followed by student and parent workshops on decision-making and high school selection considerations.

Each month of the program is devoted to occupational information in a given area. For example, January might be on Health, February on Natural Health, April on Engineering, and May on High Technology.

☐ In week one, students learn from videotapes and written materials.

☐ In week two, students are given tours of business or organizations in the occupational cluster.

☐ In week three, role model speakers make presentations.

☐ In week four, students undertake a series of evaluative exercises.

The final culminating event is an entertainment program related to Career Linking.

Unlike most career education programs at the middle school level, the Career Linking program was evaluated. The results were fascinating and provocative. Students learned more about the duties performed in various occupations. They also improved in their knowledge of how jobs are selected in life. But they did not improve in their knowledge of what educational requirements are needed in various occupations. Although this was an important part of the program, it is not easy to help middle school youth to understand the connections between educational "inputs" and career "outcomes."

The evaluation report, by Dadya Fouad, is available from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, NYC.

ACTIVITIES THAT INTRODUCE SOME KEY REALITIES OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING

This aspect of Future Options Education is appropriate for all middle-grades students. However, it is especially needed by students who have potential to succeed, but might be unlikely to finish high school or further their education without special attention.

It is designed to overcome several common myths, and to produce a clearer picture of what college or training after high school are really like:

Myth #1: "I don't like school. I'll be lucky to make it through high school! I couldn't stand having to go through more "school" after that."

Reality: Activities within this segment help students and parents understand the differences between the middle-grades or high school, and post-secondary education or training. They need to know that education and training after high school are often less structured and offer students more choices -- as well as the chance to focus upon their particular (as well as new) interests.

Myth #2: "College is for geniuses. Because I'm not doing too well in school right now, I'm not smart enough to go on to college or training after high school."

Reality: A key role of Future Options activities is to counter discouraging messages -- from peers, parents, other adults, the media, and even teachers -- that may make students think that they are incapable of undertaking post-secondary education, training. or skilled employment. Students receive affirmation from adults and peers whom they respect that they have the potential to achieve these goals. Students get lots of feedback letting them know that they are capable.

Students and parents learn that "smarts," as reflected in performance during the middle-grades, do not necessarily reflect innate ability or intelligence. They learn that underachievement may be corrected in any number of ways -- different teaching methods, new opportunities, improved study habits or environment, etc. They also learn that, in many cases, middle-grades achievement issues can be addressed long before post-high-school performance becomes an issue.

These activities also show students and parents that, given effort, nearly any determined individual can successfully pursue and succeed in education or training beyond high school (Many schools, vocational training programs, and corporations offer tutors, writing centers, study-skills courses, and other assistance for their students or employees.)

Students participate in activities that nurture their educational aspirations, talents, and motivation. Activities may include communication to parents about their child's potential and what parents can do to support the child's development, outreach by teachers and counselors to encourage the student's participation in Future Options activities, and referrals to special after-school and summer enrichment programs.

What Can You Do Now? Ideas For Teachers and Principals:

- You can hold special school-wide events such as "College Awareness Weeks." These involve activities that engage students' interest in post-secondary education. Activities might include the following:
    - -- School staff bring in college memorabilia and wear clothes with the name of the college from which they graduated.
    - -- Art classes make banners of each teacher's alma mater to hang in homerooms.
    - -- Teachers spend five minutes at the beginning of each class sharing a college experience.
    - -- In communities where some parents are college graduates, they may be asked if they or a family friend can lend students college memorabilia to wear or bring to school.
    - -- Each morning during homeroom period a counselor or teacher describes a local college without naming it. Classes are asked to guess the mystery college, and the winners receive souvenirs from that college as prizes.
    - -- Book-covers from local colleges are distributed to all students.
    - -- Students meet representatives from local colleges who "spur them on" to pursue college.

- You can start another school-wide, extracurricular activity -- a "College Club". Similar to other student organizations focussing on what students will do in the future, College Club activities consist of monthly meetings with motivational speakers, trips to local campuses, videos related to educational planning and general discussions about what to expect in college, and how to prepare for it. Advisors for the College Club are usually a teacher or a volunteer from a local post-secondary institution.

- You might also consider creating games that increase student awareness of post-secondary education and training. One particularly creative approach we came across, known as "College Pursuit," is a take-off on the popular "Trivial Pursuit" game. It involves post-secondary institutions setting up hands-on activities demonstrating a particular aspect of the educational programs they offer. Students play the "game" using a game card that is stamped by a college or training program representative when they finish each activity. Students who complete the game card are rewarded with door prizes and refreshments.

- You might enhance the role of your guidance office. This is a relatively easy step which may involve the development of a video lending-library focusing upon occupations, colleges, training programs, apprenticeships, and educational and financial planning.

- On a more ambitious level, you may wish to incorporate computerized guidance systems to promote early awareness. Popular among students, these systems generally focus on career exploration. Unfortunately, most post-secondary information systems are designed for students in the upper high school years and may not be relevant to the immediate needs of middle-grades students. Luckily, several software systems for young adolescents are currently being developed by national organizations. These will significantly improve the capacity of middle-grades guidance offices, and are worth pursuing.

- In additional to using technology to enhance guidance offices, you can significantly improve your school's capacity to provide early awareness activities by designating somebody to be the "Future Options Information Counselor". Depending upon the resources available, this person might be a part-or full-time school employee, a volunteer, a loaned staff-person from an organization outside the school, or individual from some other place. In the middle-grades context, this counselor might be responsible for:

  - organizing and maintaining information about occupations, education, and training opportunities after high school;
  - disseminating information about occupations, careers, post-secondary educational and training opportunities to teachers, other counselors, students and parents;
  - helping students choose middle-grades courses that will keep the doors open to post-secondary education/ training admission requirements;
  - providing students and parents with information about financial planning;
  - coordinating Future Options activities; and
  - referring students to summer enrichment programs.

- Site visits to a college campus or training school can offer middle-grades students the chance to experience, first hand, the reality of education or training after high school. The most common approach to these visits involves providing general information about what the education or training experience is like, what financial aid programs are available, and what preparation is needed for entry. Another approach is to focus on specific careers. For example, students visit a campus or program for a day of hands-on activities exposing them to various careers.

  Site visits nearly always include a tour of facilities, the opportunity to talk with students and faculty. At colleges, the visit may also include a meal on campus or even an over-night in a dormitory. Such visits usually are organized by admissions offices. Student organizations such as minority student groups and student governments often are involved, helping plan activities and hosting the young adolescents. Many site visit programs include follow-up activities once students return to school: class assignments, writing articles for the school newspaper, and sharing the experience with other students.

But this aspect of Future Options Education is not just about "activities." It's not enough to offer programs, simple processes, or activities. Quick-fix interventions have limited effects. One must also consider quality, and quality takes time and effort.

Much of a student's perception about his/her ability to attend college comes down to the issue of self-esteem. We know that self-esteem is not improved through an occasional workshop on the subject. Rather, it is developed through regular successes and positive feedback from a wide variety of sources over extended periods of time.

In this publication, we do not spend much time on ways in which middle-grades schools need to reform, alter teaching methods, or improve their general learning environments. There's plenty of information on those subjects in other literature.

However, we recommend the following precepts, gleaned from the excellent work of Joan Lipsitz at the Center for Early Adolescence, from her book, Successful Schools For Young Adolescents. These notions regarding the developmental needs of middle-grades students can contribute ultimately to improved self-esteem -- and hence a stronger belief in their ability to pursue positive future options. Middle-grades schools can reinforce Future Options Education lessons by permeating all school activities with a philosophy of "High Expectations."

To reinforce the philosophy of "High Expectations," teachers and other school personnel should, whenever possible:

☐ confront and reject common misconceptions such as that academic ability is fixed very early and is largely unchangeable.

☐ challenge students to do things they don't think they can do.

☐ regularly help students grasp where they are, where they're capable of being, where they're expected to be, and how they're going to get there.

☐ help students develop a positive vision of their futures, and then form milestones and incorporate regular wins enroute.

Middle-grades schools can reinforce Future Options Education lessons by permeating all activities with a philosophy of "High Support."

To reinforce the philosophy of "High Support," teachers and other school personnel should, whenever possible:

☐ involve parents in planning and supporting their children's education and future options.

☐ help students learn from personal experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, and fashion a promising vision of the future.

☐ build strengths rather than focusing upon remediating problems.

High Support (Cont.)

- ☐ send a consistent message stressing that "everyone needs help sometime" -- removing stigma from seeking assistance.
- ☐ avoid treating kids who need help as "damaged goods."
- ☐ offer assistance during convenient hours.
- ☐ regularly recognize student achievements, incorporating positive feedback, incentives, and awards.

Middle-grades schools can also reinforce Future Options Education lessons by permeating all activities with a philosophy of "High Content."

To reinforce the philosophy of "High Content," teachers and other school personnel should, whenever possible:

- ☐ assure that learning is interesting and fun.
- ☐ base instructional strategies not on passive listening to lectures; but rather on discussions, activity-oriented learning, and cooperative learning.
- ☐ assure that curricula relate a diverse, detailed, multi-experientially-based course load to everyday situations and career possibilities.
- ☐ use multiple and culturally-diverse resources.
- ☐ help students see connections and transferrable skills between subjects and disciplines.
- ☐ incorporate activities that involve tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions.
- ☐ promote basic skills development, integrating the use of basic and vocational skills.
- ☐ promote critical thinking abilities and facilitate higher order thinking skills.
- ☐ induce students to broaden interests by trying new things.

High Content (Cont.)

☐ help students develop aspirations and motivation for opportunities beyond high school by encouraging them to seriously consider all choices.

☐ offer a climate that honors inquiry.

☐ stress practical knowledge.

☐ develop a flexible scheduling system that allows adequate time spent on academic tasks and on guidance/advisory functions.

☐ provide an environment where competition is fair.

☐ use individualized and small-group instructional materials and practices.

☐ use instruction and opportunities to help students develop a commitment to social and life values.

☐ enable students to work together in groups and encourage participatory skills.

☐ develop a school environment that is person-oriented rather than rule-oriented.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVESTIGATE WAYS TO PAY FOR EDUCATION OR TRAINING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Many middle-grades students and their parents too often hold common misconceptions about the costs of education or training after high school. Particularly in families where parents were not educated beyond high school, myths abound:

Myth: "We can't afford to have our children go to school after they graduate from high school."

Myth: "I can't go to college or take more training because I need to support myself after I finish high school."

Myth: "College is years away. We don't need to deal with that until junior year of high school."

Many students and parents tend to see all post-secondary educational institutions as very expensive. Unfortunately, much of people's "knowledge" of post-secondary education or training is based on media reports about the costs of college or vocational training, and about cuts in financial aid. For example, a recent Gallup poll found that most high school students think that college costs three times as much as it actually does.

Many parents fail to distinguish among elite private colleges, four year public colleges, community colleges, or vocational training schools. They also do not realize that there are billions of public financial aid dollars available.

In addition, students and parents are unaware that working does not preclude post-secondary education or training. They need to know about part-time study opportunities, cooperative education, and other possibilities for combining work and training.

Therefore, this aspect of Future Options Education provides information about the realities of education and training costs, and about how families can meet them. It introduces parents to the types of financial aid, who is eligible, and how it is awarded. The basis on which colleges and training programs determine the amount they expect families to contribute toward their children's education is explored, as well as the concepts of need-based and merit-based aid. Parents are alerted to the possibility that they may have to borrow, and they are informed about the differences between educational and consumer loans.

Families learn about steps they can take to begin planning for education/training costs during the middle-grades. They consider ways to develop a savings plan appropriate for their income level. Specific information on various investment/savings tools available to families is provided. Parents receive repeated reassurance that sufficient financial aid exists to make education or training after high school a realistic possibility for even the lowest income student.

But Future Options Education does not have to end with activities that make students and parents aware of traditional financing strategies.

A large number of middle-grades and high schools around the country have developed very creative financial incentive programs. These may include scholarship funds for academic achievement that guarantee a college education to young people who stay in school and meet certain academic and civic standards. Or they may use "pay for grades" approaches and other scholarship incentives to encourage adolescents to complete college applications and go on to college.

Many of these are developed in partnership with post-secondary education institutions. These efforts often consist of tuition guarantees linked to middle-grades academic achievement. These programs are based on the assumption that guaranteeing tuition scholarships to students in the middle-grades will motivate them to undertake the rigors of a college preparatory program in high school. Incentives may be offered to all students in a school district, a particular grade, or to a group specifically defined as "underachievers" -- youth identified by school staff as needing special support.

In one of these incentive programs, students and their families agree to meet defined standards: enroll in and graduate from a college preparation program, maintain a B average, and score at a certain level or better on a standardized admission test. For students who meet these standards, the post-secondary institution pledges admission and meets the students' full financial need. Such programs also include mentoring, tutoring, campus visits, and, in many cases, a residential summer experience.

In another program, a community college mails every eighth grade student in it's district "Possible Dream" certificates inscribed with their own names. The certificates are redeemable for two years of post-secondary education even if the tuition increases over the next five years. The only obligation of the student's family is to deposit $10.00 per month into a college saving account until the student graduates from high school. This money, along with a contribution from the college, is invested for the student. Families may withdraw at any time from the program for a $25.00 bookkeeping fee. Campus visits and counseling are provided to all students participating in the program.

Another incentive activity is financial rewards for students who do well in school. The most widely publicized example is Cleveland, Ohio's "Scholarship-in-Escrow" program in which students receive money for achievement in core academic subjects. Grade values are $40.00 for an A, $20.00 for a B, and $10.00 for a C. The money is paid to the post-secondary institution the student chooses to attend upon completion of high school. Along with the money, students receive post-secondary information and guidance.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

"Statewide Youth Educational Awareness Program" in Massachusetts

Developed by the Higher Education Information Center, this program brings together volunteers from public schools, higher education, community agencies, and businesses to inform young people about post-secondary education, career options, and financial aid. The Educational Awareness Program operates in 17 Massachusetts cities, reaching out to populations that are under-represented in post-secondary programs. The program publishes information aimed at students and their parents, and sponsors activities such as:

"Dream A Little:" a workshop that encourages 8th graders to think about career and lifestyle choices, and about the importance of post-secondary education in making those options possible.

"College Pursuit Nights:" an activity that shows 8th graders that learning can be exciting. It is based upon the popular board game "Trivial Pursuit," and uses hands-on activities developed by area colleges.

"Parent Workshops:" in which parents are given information on educational opportunities and financial aid before their children go to high school. This early intervention helps parents understand the connection between their children's future and the courses those children take in high school.

"Paving The Way" in Fort Worth, Texas

With help from private foundations, Fort Worth middle-grades schools have begun a program called "Paving The Way" which strives to make college a viable alternative for young minority students. The program focuses on parental and community involvement, and on a trusting partnership between school and home. Middle graders in this program:

Attend student-parent workshops:

☐ In the spring, the school holds evening meetings that expose parents and seventh- and eighth- graders to skills and practices that make college a possibility. College representatives and district school administrators stress early preparation, and suggest special activities and programs. They describe magnet schools, vocational education offerings, and various pre-college courses.

Participate in college-boosting activities in school:

☐ Special class activities and button campaigns help students visualize a future at college. Teachers discuss what made them decide to go to college and describe people who influenced them.

Receive publications on colleges and financial aid:

☐ Eighth-graders receive a newsletter and information from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Visit nearby college campuses:

☐ Many disadvantaged students have never seen a college, so it is a treat to visit nearby campuses, attend classes, and talk to college students.

Attend Junior University:

☐ For a week, 120 sixth-graders spend time at Texas Christian University. Based upon their academic potential and financial need, students are chosen to receive special attention from college professors across disciplines.

Source: Information excerpted and adapted from December 26, 1989 Education Monitor, taken from article by Jo Shaw Kiley, "On the Road To College: Paving The Way," The College Board Review, No. 153, Fall 1989, College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue., New York, NY 10023-6992, (212) 713-8000.

The College Readiness Program:
A Joint Project of Columbus Middle Schools and Capital University

The College Readiness Program (CRP) is a joint middle school initiative undertaken by the Columbus Public Schools and Capital University. The program provides selected 6th and 7th graders with an understanding that post-secondary education is an attainable goal, and helps them to increase their skills. It integrates learning activities in math, science, foreign language, art and drama with campus visits.

Students gain first-hand experience of how academic, social, and personal skills relate to college preparation. While on campus, students become familiar with the various academic and social facilities (labs, libraries, and dorms). Capital University students get involved with the middle schoolers through a campus internship program.

Middle-grades students are encouraged to pursue their own interests while learning about different careers and professions. Improvement of current skills is stressed, particularly in writing, time management, goal-setting and problem-solving. Eighth-graders are helped to plan for high school with emphasis on taking college prep courses. To participate as well as continue in CRP, middle-grades students must demonstrate acceptable grades and test scores, appropriate behaviors, and attitudes. Parental involvement is also required through attendance at an orientation session and two evening meetings.

Findings from a system-wide survey of the more than 1,800 CRP students and their parents show that most respondents believe that college is possible and that financial help is available. Most importantly: 87% of students say that they plan to go to college, and 97% of parents want their child to continue in CRP.

For further information, contact: College Readiness Program, Columbus Public Schools, Columbus, Ohio.

Adapted from: College Readiness Program Informational Packet.

ACTIVITIES THAT KEEP THE DOOR OPEN FOR ATTRACTIVE FUTURE OPTIONS

Early awareness activities make explicit the importance of middle-grades education as a vehicle for attaining future career and lifestyle goals. Students and parents learn what students must do, academically, during the middle-grades years to enhance their chances of qualifying for post-secondary education, training, and/or attractive jobs. Activities stimulate students to seek new experiences that will prepare them to achieve long-term goals.

As part of this process (preferably done before, or at least early in, the student's middle-grades years), Future Options Education looks at "tracking." Activities help students and parents better understand the differences among general, vocational, and academic programs -- and their ramifications for the student's future.

There are also "bridge" models provided in the last year of the middle-grades. At the student level, these are orientation programs that tell middle-grades youngsters what they can expect when they go to high school, and help them choose appropriate highs schools. At the administrative and management information system (MIS) level, these are approaches in which efforts are made to have every student develop a plan that informs educational choices in high school.

Also within this "Prerequisites" category are "Enrichment Activities." These help students improve their academic performance so that they are better prepared to pursue ambitious post-high-school goals. Enrichment activities are usually academic "booster" programs (such as tutoring, computer-based learning, or after-school advanced-placement activities) that augment students' regular classroom experiences.

A common "bridge model" event targeted to middle-grades students and their parents is the "high school fair" at which they can talk with representatives of the various high schools in their district.

Some enrichment programs are remedial in their approach, providing assistance with the "3-Rs" and vocational skill-building. These are usually targeted to students who are achieving below their potential, and/or have been assigned to a general track. Students participate in activities that help them improve their basic skills enough so that they can advance out of that track. Goals might encompass building academic skills, motivation, and self-confidence. These activities usually take place over a sustained period of time -- months or even years -- and sometimes involve a summer component of one to four weeks.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

Pairing Middle-Grades and College Youth
"Youth Together" in New Haven, Connecticut

At Roberto Clemente Middle-Grades School, academically- talented, but often underachieving, minority 7th and 8th grade students have been gaining self-confidence through supportive and sustaining tutorial relationships with Yale University undergraduates. Youth Together, a voluntary after-school program, matches each student with a tutor for weekly sessions over a period of a year or longer. Considering the middle-grades student's skill and interest level, the college tutor chooses how reading and writing can be creatively incorporated into their weekly meetings. Peer support and group activities as well as recreational and information gathering field trips round out the program. Since 1986, Youth Together has been helping middle graders appreciate their talents, set high academic standards, and, most of all, gain self-confidence at a crucial stage of adolescence. According to the Executive Director, Arthur Unobskey, "The strongest asset and most powerful tool is the bond that develops between tutor and student as they spend regular time together."

For more information, contact: Arthur Unobskey, P.O. Box 7223 Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520, (203) 773-1339, or 2770 Green Street, San Francisco, CA 94123, (415) 931-1118.

Adapted from: "Youth Together:" (A. Unobskey) in Youth Record (5/3/89).

The Comprehensive Competencies Program

The Comprehensive Competencies Program is a highly individualized, self-paced, "stand alone" computer-based instructional program. It is most often used as a "second chance" program for dropouts, and predominantly in grades 9-12. However, it is in use in several middle level schools around the country, including Bill Reed Junior High in Loveland, Colorado; Glover Middle-grades in Spokane, Washington; Hubert and Bartlett Middle-grades in Savannah, Georgia; Arabi Park and Beauregard Middle-grades in Louisiana, and several others.

The system addresses a hierarchy of competency objectives, ranging from the rudimentary basic skills, to a variety of functional competencies and life skills, including looking for and keeping jobs, consumer skills, citizenship, health and community participation. Learning is self-directed, and testing and record keeping are integrated into the system. The CCP Learning Centers provide diagnosis of learner's needs, individualized instruction, competency-based education, self-directed learning, positive reinforcement, accountability, one-to-one attention from teachers in a supportive environment, and work and training linkages.

For more information, contact: Nahid Walsh, U.S. Basics, 1700 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 684-1265.

BASICS: Bridging Vocational and Academic Skills
North Carolina's New Bern-Craven County Middle-Grades

Three middle-grades in New Bern-Craven County are implementing a combined vocational and academic program to improve students' basic skills. "Strengthening Basic Skills Through An Integrated Middle-grades Curriculum" is one of the BASICS programs developed by the Center on Education and Training for Employment at Ohio State University, in collaboration with a group of teachers and administrators from the County's school system

The impetus for taking a fresh look at a combined vocational-academic approach to basic skills grew out of the Center's concern about youth's inadequate academic preparation for the world of work. Thus, the Center developed BASICS: Bridging Vocational and Academic Skills, a comprehensive set of resources designed to attack the basic skills problem. Working with County high school and middle-grades personnel, the Center developed an integrated curriculum model, staff development activities, and curriculum assessment procedures. While this program is relatively new, initial indicators are positive. According to the program's director, "Students seem to better absorb competencies through the new approach to instruction, and teachers are better able to develop meaningful instructional strategies when they articulate their efforts with other disciplines."

For further information, contact: L. Douglas Davis, Vocational Director, New Bern-Craven County Board of Education, 3600 Trent Road, New Bern, NC 28562. Source: Adapted from CENTERGRAM (Nov. 1989) Vol XXIV, No.11, Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University.

Other enrichment activities may have a special "enhancement" function. They may focus on a student's particular academic interest, providing "accelerated" activities focusing on advanced learning in that area of interest. (It is common for this type of activity to prepare students for careers requiring mathematics or science backgrounds).

Specific activities included in educational enrichment programs may be tutoring, computer-based learning, after-school classes, special-release time, "constructive play," mentoring, field trips to work-sites, Saturday science labs, tutoring and guidance.

SOURCES OF HELP

Local Sources of Help

There are many local people and places to whom students and parents can turn for assistance. Among the local sources of help are:

☐ Extended family members
☐ Teachers
☐ Counselors
☐ Clergy
☐ Employers
☐ Public libraries
☐ Community education agencies
☐ Government-funded programs, such as those provided under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
☐ Chambers of Commerce
☐ Trade unions
☐ Community-based telephone hot-lines for assistance or referrals
☐ Admissions and financial aid offices

National Sources of Help

In addition to these local resources for students and parents, there are many national sources of help for teachers and principals wishing to undertake some aspects of Future Options Education. While this is far from a complete list, it is a sampling of resources that are available. Further resource lists and bibliographies are available from Brandeis University, Center for Human Resources, 1-800-343-4705.

Academy for Educational Development, Inc.
100 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011
(212) 243-1110

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development
11 Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 265-9080

The Center for Corporate Community Relations
Boston College
36 College Road
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-3835
(617) 552-4545

The Center for Early Adolescence
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 211, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148

Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS)
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

Coalition of Essential Schools
Box 1938
Brown University
Providence, RI 02912
(401) 863-3384

Education Writers Association
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20036

Institute for Citizen Involvement in Education
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
(201) 745-5849

National Middle School Association
4807 Evanswood Drive
Columbus, OH 43229-6292
(614) 848-8211

The National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education
University of South Florida
College of Education, EDU-115
Tampa, FL 33620-5650
(813) 974-2530

William T. Grant Foundation
Commission on Youth and America's Future
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 775-9731

Yale Child Study Center
P.O. Box 3333
230 South Frontage Road
New Haven, CT 06510

CHAPTER 3

PERSONALIZED ADULT ATTENTION

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PERSONALIZED ADULT ATTENTION

"We believe our students understand that positive options await them after high school. We are convinced, and they are too, that they're capable of pursuing those options. We have provided them information about the processes involved in moving toward their goals, and they know who to turn to for help. What else could they possibly need?"

We know that a common difference between young people who stumble, and those who work their way through the obstacle course of adolescence, is the presence and regular support of a caring adult. This adult can help the young person overcome the many barriers that will crop up between the middle-grades years and the achievement of his/her post-high-school goals.

According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, "Every student should be well-known to at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help to fashion a promising vision of the future."

In most families this role is played by a parent or close relative; however, too often it is lacking. For young adolescents, there is a clear need to assure that it is provided -- if not through family, then perhaps through a school-appointed advisor or a community-provided mentor.

A support system of adults is a necessary part of the scaffolding that bolsters Future Options Education. They provide the necessary assistance and oversight to elevate many adolescents above the strong peer pressure and pull toward mediocrity exerted by disadvantaged neighborhoods. They can help offset the lure of more lucrative, and more dangerous, illegal or underground pursuits many of which are glamorized by television and the media.

But if you were thinking of leaving the responsibility for providing each student with personal adult attention at the door of the school guidance department, think again. You know as well as we do that the typical guidance department is overwhelmed already, and can hardly go it alone. Helping each young adolescent prepare for his/her future is everyone's obligation. There is lots of responsibility to go around.

The fact is that Future Options Education isn't the role of only one person or one department. Although many aspects of it sound like "guidance," it's actually a multi-faceted team approach calling for the talent, time, and resources of parents, school personnel and departments, and community institutions.

As students progress through the middle-grades, they encounter daily and are affected by their teachers, teaching teams, teacher aides, and fellow students. Hopefully, students also have reasonably regular contacts with advisors in Advisor-Advisee programs and with guidance staff. All of these individuals can play an important role in increasing students' future options.

Although direct contact may be sporadic, students certainly are affected by school principals and administrators, and by division-level staff.

But the list of potential key "influencers" doesn't have to end there. Most schools lack the full complement of resources to address each student's unique needs. Schools are, however, in a central position to network with some "outside" institutions. Although doing so is not a "required" aspect of Future Options Education, the capacity to provide an impressive array of options will be greatly enhanced if schools attract resources from:

☐ community-based organizations;
☐ government-funded programs;
☐ guidance professionals at organizations outside the school;
☐ business resources and business people; and
☐ professionals and volunteers from the community.

Of course, including all the "right" people and institutions doesn't guarantee success. If their efforts aren't coordinated or placed within a common context, or if the parties aren't sufficiently prepared, the ultimate impact on a young person's life may be limited.

This chapter examines three common strategies that assure each student a relationship with a caring adult, and that coordinate the actions and activities of other adults and institutions:

1. Parent Involvement Models;
2. Advisory Models; and
3. Mentoring Models.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT MODELS:

Why Parental Involvement Is Important:

When we ask teachers today to set high expectations, we are asking for a lot more than simply good teaching. We are asking them to help convey the message that everyone has potential, everyone can succeed. This message cannot get through sufficiently without reinforcement in the home. (We note that many students are raised by guardians, grandparents, etc. For the sake of conciseness, we will refer to any of these people as "parents.").

Parental involvement is important to the schools, the students, and the parents themselves. With parents' help, schools can offer adolescents both positive examples and first-hand experiences that are reinforced at the kitchen table.

Children who see their parents taking an active interest in their schools behave better and perform better in school. And parents who take an active interest in schools are far better able to support the school mission in the home because they understand it and have rapport with the school staff.

The active involvement of a student's parent(s) in school can also dramatically improve the academic performance of a student who previously has not done well. It can also raise the expectations the parents have for their children's education.

Research has also documented that parental preference is the most important factor in students' plans for post-high-school education or training. This fact holds true for all students regardless of family income or racial/ethnic group.

Research on parents of students in the middle-grades indicates a much higher level of interest in information about post-high-school planning than is found among the students themselves. In one study, more than three-fourths of all parents said they would be willing to participate in various "early awareness" activities as compared with just under half of the students surveyed. Nine out of ten parents expressed an interest in encouraging their children to spend more time studying to improve their grades, talking with their children about plans for education after high school, and exploring with their children the jobs they might be able to get after completing post-secondary education or training.

In addition, slightly more than three-fourths of the parents said they would be interested in:

- ☐ listening to a talk on financial aid;
- ☐ attending a college night;
- ☐ talking with teachers or counselors about the courses students need to take to prepare for post-secondary education;
- ☐ helping their children find an after school or summer job to help earn money for education; and
- ☐ attending a school sponsored career day.

These findings underscore the importance of involving parents in Future Options Education activities.

The Parenting Role

Future Options Education can broaden parents' vision of what their children can achieve, develop a partnership with them, and engage them in useful roles. It's easy to say, "Let's involve parents." However, enlisting parental support and participation requires a special effort.

Educators have observed that even parents who have been active during their children's elementary school years (For example, the suburban parent who sponsors bake sales, volunteers in the library, helps with science fair projects, attends parent-teacher conferences) are less likely to remain involved when their children reach adolescence. In the inner-city, this idealistic example may be all too rare. There may be a variety of reasons for the lack of parental involvement -- some practical, some psychological, others socio-economic -- that must be understood and addressed.

Typical Reasons Some Parents Appear To Lose Interest In The Middle School Years

☐ Most parents work full-time or have considerable family responsibilities, and school-related events are scheduled at inconvenient times;

☐ Their own children discourage their attention (It's not "cool" to have parents who pay too much attention);

☐ They may have more difficulty understanding their children and their needs when they reach adolescence;

☐ They may feel that their lack of formal education will be embarrassing if they try to communicate with teachers at grade levels exceeding their own limited education;

☐ They have been told that their children should function more independently, so they intentionally keep a low profile;

☐ They find that the number of teachers they must deal with in the middle-grades usually multiplies. In contrast to elementary school, there is no longer a single teacher who they can contact, and it becomes logistically difficult to coordinate and meet with seven or eight teachers.

☐ They are unsure of how they can be of help;

☐ They are uncertain whether the schools want their participation and assistance.

Experienced educators tell us that these issues can be overcome, that most parents are willing to play a role, and that guidance from the school can bring them back into the Future Options Education arena.

Developing Future Options Education Partnerships With Parents

Parent involvement has become the cornerstone of many current schemes to reform public education. But it is the same for any institution -- outsiders will hesitate to get involved unless they know they are welcome.

Research has shown that when schools alert parents that their participation is vital, and show them ways to be effective, the children benefit in dramatic ways.

Many parents need help to feel effective. They can benefit from ideas about how they can support their children's aspirations and assist with planning for future options. The importance of talking with children about the value of education to their futures, providing a quiet place for children to do homework, encouraging children to try new challenges, and taking pride in children's educational accomplishments should be discussed. Parents need encouragement to call teachers and guidance counselors with questions, and might need suggestions on the types of questions they could ask.

Schools can empower parents in many ways: creating a welcoming environment, using a multi-cultural approach, establishing formal programs for parental involvement, and being clear about ways parents can help. Furthermore, schools can foster a general sense of community that makes parents more aware of their responsibilities.

Parents can be brought into the school during regular school hours, on Saturdays, or after school. Or "school may be brought to the parents" through home visits. A school might provide seminars on parenting skills, develop initiatives to improve literacy among family members, or involve parents in providing career and higher education information to their children. With the school's help, parents can become empowered, willing, and knowledgeable enough to feel welcome to help their children and others directly.

What Can You Do Now? Ideas For Teachers And Principals:

- **Share the School's Mission and Goals:** Often neither parents nor their children have a clear sense of the mission and the goals of the school. It is appropriate to ensure that the families are clear on the school's primary purpose and functions, and its Future Options Education philosophy.

- **Develop A Future Options Education Logo or Symbol:** To reinforce the importance of Future Options Education, it may be desirable to use a school contest, a parent association, a commercial design firm, or a graphic designer to develop simple art-work that symbolizes the program. This logo can be displayed around the school, placed in the school handbook, and used on school letterhead.

- **Make the School a Welcoming Place:** The administrative offices should be professional, personable, and pleasant places for parents to visit. Staff should be trained to be especially helpful to parents and outside visitors. It might even be helpful for schools to have a "parent room."

- **Send Messages Home:** Communicate about Future Options Education through parents who are actively involved in school governance, parent action committees, or parent associations. Students themselves may serve as couriers to send messages from principal and teachers that a parent's help is needed and welcomed.

- System-wide activities for parents often include letters from public officials stressing the importance of post-secondary education or training for students' future opportunities, and asking parents to encourage their children's educational aspirations.

  School districts may also produce newsletters -- with information about post-high-school planning -- sent to parents on a regular basis. There also are short publications for parents produced either by school systems or higher education organizations that cover various aspects of early planning for future education or training, and the role of families in helping their children achieve in school.

- **Understand "Multi-Cultural" Needs:** Schools can take extra steps to ensure that parents who don't speak English, or parents from diverse cultural backgrounds, are welcomed and provided extra support. Welcome signs can be printed in different languages. Other signs, handbooks, letters, handouts, and newsletters may also need to be produced in several languages. Often, multilingual children may be used to translate for visiting parents -- thereby, reinforcing the values of their skills. Corporations and community groups may be able to help with multi-lingual and multi-cultural needs by providing translations, consulting, and training to school personnel.

- **Offer Workshops for Parents:** Offer workshops to parents that convey information about post-high-school options, the courses students need to take in high school, and how parents can support their children's aspirations.

  Early financial planning workshops can address issues related to financing higher education and provide information on financial and education savings vehicles. Such workshops are most relevant to middle income families who have the financial resources to begin saving early for college expenses.

  Encourage parental participation in workshops. Mail personal invitations home, written in the parents' first language. Schedule workshops at convenient times for working parents, and provide refreshments and, in some cases, transportation. In some cases, students can be included in the parent workshop.

- **Involve Parents In Classroom Presentations:** Teachers can invite parents into the classroom to give prepared talks about future options in higher education and careers. One such model program is called "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork," known as TIPS, developed by Dr. Joyce Epstein at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. In TIPS, teachers share with parent volunteers background information on art, social studies and math topics. The parent studies the material and comes into the classroom to lecture the class on a chosen topic. Parents often draw on their career interests to make their points. Parents who are able to participate in Future Options Education often learn useful information themselves, while helping students, teachers and other parents.

- **Create a Future Options Resource Corner:** Teachers may ask parents to set up a Future Options resource corner in a classroom, to display information that will help make what the student studies today relevant to the broader world. For example, the corner might contain copies of textbooks with a message from the teacher inside the front cover, explaining future applications of this subject later in life. The corner may also contain relevant references (books, videotapes, etc.) on higher education, occupations, good work habits, job preparation and career choices. The corner may be furnished through donations from business, and decorated with career-related posters, either commercially available or posters prepared by the students or parents themselves. Parents may help track school alumnae, and gather information about the colleges they attended and the companies for whom they work. The corner could also contain materials for parents on adolescent development and middle-grades education.

The Future Options Resource Center can also serve as a resource for parents who, themselves, seek information on other opportunities.

- **Introduce Role Models into Adolescents' Lives:** While schools are responsible for bringing in people from the broader community, some parents, too, may be able to share in this responsibility. A parent with access to such people may be able to help a school to introduce students to role models such as skilled craftspeople, politicians, authors, architects, photographers, store managers, scientists, doctors, lawyers, professional sales executives, and others. Often, these people will gladly make time to spend a few hours with a classroom of students. What better way for an adolescent to learn about new technologies, jobs in growth industries, and the skills needed for the next century?

- **Use the Parents' Association to Promote Future Options Education:** The Parents' Association can implement a campaign to promote and educate parents and the community about Future Options Education. An effective communications campaign might cover five areas: 1) life and study skills young adolescents need to be successful students and employees; 2) standards of achievement required in the middle-grades to prepare students for a successful high school and college experience; 3) courses students need to take and preparation required for entrance to college; 3) exploration of different fields of college study; 4) exploration of the job market and statistics on the labor market; and, 5) workshops which address possible conflicts between parental and school expectations for students.

  In addition, telephone support networks usually are organized by parent organizations to link parents who have experience with post-secondary education with parents who are unfamiliar with how to help their children plan for education beyond high school. The experienced parents serve as resource people for the inexperienced parents using the telephone as the primary communications vehicle.

- **Above All Else, Strengthen Family-School Communication:** Schools must win the support of parents and find ways to ensure more congruence between what children experience in the home, and what they experience at school. According to Yale University's Dr. James P. Comer, the young person's psychological preparation for school, and the collaboration of school staff and parents in the child's academic and social development, are of critical importance.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

Helping Parents Become Oriented To Junior High School In Middlebury, Vermont

At Middlebury Junior High School in Middlebury, Vermont, the school and teacher advisors have a number of ways to help orient and engage the interest of sixth-grade students and their parents. In February, prior to students entering the seventh grade, the process begins with a series of discussion groups for parents. At these discussions, which are initially held at the elementary schools, parents' questions and concerns are addressed after viewing a videotape about Middlebury Union Junior High School.

Throughout the spring and summer, parents receive information from the school in the form of newsletters, letters, and a parents' handbook. In May, there is an annual curriculum fair that sixth-grade parents and students attend. Also, parents and sixth-grade teachers receive a questionnaire that requests information about their child, e.g. interests, likes and dislikes, concerns. Over the summer, the Teacher Advisor contacts the parents in order to answer any questions they may have. Each teacher has only eight to ten students to advise!
In the fall, several open houses are held during which parents meet both their children's teams (their five core teachers) and their teacher advisors. The guidance department facilitates the program.

For further information on Middlebury, Vermont Junior High School, see "Parent Involvement in New Futures," The New Futures Institute, Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, Resource Guide Series, Vol.1, 1989.

A Parental Involvement Model at Montgomery Jr. High School In San Diego, California

Montgomery Jr. High School in San Diego has a full range of parent involvement activities. Their Parent Partnership Program handbook states that schools cannot take on the sole responsibility for educating students. They state clearly how parents and other community members can support and contribute to the efforts of the schools. It is a two-way street; teachers expect help as their right, and they get it. They also reward it, with 28 ways of recognizing volunteers including a pot luck dinner for volunteers and spouses.

At the beginning of the school year, a "Help Your School - Be a Volunteer!" form is distributed, asking if parents would be interested in being involved in office work, newsletter production, telephoning parents of absent students, assisting in the classroom or in after school tutoring. "Would you like to help on special occasions (book fair, bake sales, chaperon dances, 7th grade parent coffee, or lunch time sales)? Would you be interested in giving a workshop, attending Shadow-Your-Student Day (enjoy a typical Junior High School day and attend all your child's classes), working on Adopt-a-Senior Citizen Grandparent Program and running the Family Computer Night cosponsored with a computer store? What days and what hours?" Work and home phone are requested.

At Montgomery Jr. High, the principal and teachers reach out with clear messages about what is expected of parents. For example:

The school offers workshops that help parents be better parents, for example "Systematic Training For Effective Parenting For Teenagers; Who's In Charge In Your Home? You Or Your Kids?;" A Drug Awareness Week and Workshops; and ESL classes.

The school reaches out unabashedly to businesses and the Navy in their Adopt-a-School Program. The students benefit from linkage with adults outside the school. At the Naval installation, they can take a course, tour the facilities, work with a tutor, get athletic coaching, get help with vocational education and join an extracurricular club. They can be recognized as an outstanding student, participate in how-to-get a job lessons and be eligible for part-time work. Navy personnel instruct in nutrition, fitness, drug abuse and goal attainment. To teachers: These Navy adopters also graded test papers!

Source: "Parent Partnership Programs," 1987, published by Montgomery Junior High School. For further information, contact: Anne Benedict, Intervention Coordinator, Montgomery Junior High School, 1051 Picador Boulevard, San Diego, California 92154, (619) 691-5499 or (619) 691-5440.

The RECAP Program in Boston: Parents Negotiating Double Promotions

In Boston, Massachusetts, potential dropouts and their parents may negotiate a double promotion for middle graders who are behind one or more grades, lack the necessary credits to move on, and have a history of attendance and disciplinary problems The RECAP program in Boston middle schools uses this double promotion as the primary incentive for getting potential dropouts re-involved in their education. And, for many students, it works!

As a condition for participating in RECAP, students and their parents must sign a behavioral contract that requires students to meet all standards for promotion required of other middle grade students: 85 percent attendance in each quarter, passing grades in all subjects, 90 to 120 hours of community service, and appropriate conduct. As students exceed the minimum requirements for grades, behavior, and attendance, they earn points which they can negotiate for reductions in the hours required on community service.

Students who meet these standards can advance two grade levels in one school year - once in January and again in June. Such high expectations are coupled with high support to help the student meet contract requirements. Support consists of in-school support services and academic monitoring provided by an adult youth advocate, and collaboration with neighborhood human services in which RECAP arranges for students to earn school credits by working 45 to 120 hours per year. Between 1983 and 1987, 282 students were promoted to high school at midyear. By April, 1987, 75 percent were still at the high school.

For more information, contact: Joe Smith, Boston Public Schools, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, (617) 726-6200. [Adapted from: Making the Middle-Grades Work (Children's Defense Fund, 1988) and THE WAY OUT (Anne Wheelock, 1986)].

Family Math Evenings At Kensington Avenue School In Springfield, Massachusetts

During "Family Math" evenings at Kensington Avenue School, middle school youngsters come with their parents to solve problems and match wits. Adopted from a model developed at the University of California at Berkeley, Family Math was designed by Heather Duncan, a teacher whose special job in the Springfield school system is to increase parent involvement in the schools. The purpose is to reduce math anxiety by introducing such concepts as geometry, spatial thinking, patterns, logic, and estimation, as well as the use of calculators. This project is designed to show adolescents that math can be fun, and to get them to pursue algebra rather than general math. Duncan believes that too many children slam career doors shut at ages 13 and 14, filtering out many career possibilities, because they shy away from the advanced mathematics courses.

The youngsters are excited about the program, saying that it is better than watching TV, sitting at home, or being bored. Here, they see their friends, spend time with their parents, communicate, play math games, and win prizes. And, at the same time, they are receiving better preparation for colleges, which often require at least three years of high school math. These evenings encourage the students to ask for help, a clue or a hint. Perseverance is a most important part of doing math.

Likewise, parents are excited about helping their children with academics, and they are talking to other parents to encourage broader involvement. There is a move on to create other programs, modeled on this, in social studies, science and language arts.

The Springfield program has received help from a local supermarket chain, Big Y, which supplies refreshments and some materials.

Tips for Teachers and Principals
Ways To Encourage Parental Involvement:

- Assume that all parents are interested in their children and in finding ways to help them achieve.
- Provide diverse roles for parents to be involved:
  - Parents as recipients and providers of information.
  - Parents as supporters of their children's educational endeavors.
  - Parents as advisors for their children.
- Establish partnerships with community organizations to reach parents who don't have time to participate in school programs, or who have difficulty coming to school because they lack child care or transportation. Partnerships can be used for:
  - Home visits in collaboration with community leaders, clergy, or social workers.
  - Providing information to parents at their work-place, at health care centers or public assistance agencies.
  - Holding early awareness workshops at churches, community centers, and neighborhood organizations.
- Convey early awareness information through local radio stations and community cable television programs targeting parents, youths and ethnic communities.
- Use the telephone to call parents on a regular basis with information about academic progress, strengths, and accomplishments of their children, as well as invitations to upcoming school functions. Use conference calls with translators to communicate with parents who do not speak English.
- Provide invitations, handouts, and workshop presentations in the parents' first language. Communicate information in ways which reflect understanding and sensitivity to cultural differences, particularly as such differences affect the parents' expectations for their children and perceptions of schools.
- Assign a guidance counselor responsibility for working with parents, particularly parents of those students identified as at-risk of not completing high school.
- Employ a parent liaison for each school to coordinate parental involvement and outreach.

Tips For Parents In Designing A Home Learning Center

A program called Parents and Counselors Together (PACT), developed by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, emphasizes the importance of the family and home in student achievement and success. They have developed methods of home and school collaboration which foster self-esteem, motivation and academic achievement, identified ways that parents can become involved in their children's education, and helped parents help their children with the study skills necessary for success in high school and beyond. PACT developed the tips reprinted below.

Design a home learning environment that is appropriate to your student's learning style, which involves the following:

☐ Identify a place in the home where studying and quiet reading can occur.

☐ Secure the resources (If possible, paper, pens, dictionary, etc.) that your child will need.

☐ Set up a standard time for homework and special class projects.

☐ Allow the child some time for fun and play.

☐ Help your child to plan his/her time so that s/he can give attention to all his/her subjects and projects (book reports, essays).

☐ Encourage games and leisure time activities that require reasoning, computation and problem-solving skills. Allow your child to build things, fix things, cook, and learn other skills.

☐ Keep an eye on what your child watches on television. Try to encourage the child to watch some educational programs.

Source: adapted from: Parents and Counselors Together Program (PACT), A Guide to Presenting Parent Workshops That Promote Educational Success With Students, by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, Suite 430, Diagonal Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, (703) 836-2222.

Parents' Resources. The Middle School Years: A Parents' Handbook by Nancy Berla, Anne T. Henderson and William Kerewsky, National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE), 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, Maryland 21044.

ADVISORY MODELS

These are models that pair a student, or small groups of students, with an adult within the school. Advisors work with the students to help them develop their plans and their goals, and keep things moving in the right direction by assisting at critical junctures.

"Advisor-Advisee" programs, the most common version of Advisory models, are not a new concept to staff and decision-makers in most middle-grades schools. It's not difficult to understand why advisorship has become a highly touted strategy, especially when so many students are now being labeled "at-risk." Young adolescents need someone who they can count upon to be regularly available, to monitor their progress and intervene when necessary, and to offer support. The theory behind these programs fulfills these needs by calling for consistency, support and advocacy for every student.

The Advisory Role in a Future Options Education Context:

Advisor-Advisee models can be adapted to support Future Options Education. To do so, the focus of the "advisor" needs to be expanded to include increased emphasis on career education and on post-secondary education and training. The advisor also takes on an expanded role as broker and coordinator of Future Options Education activities, many of which will be provided by other staff.

For the sake of clarity, throughout this document we will refer to an advisor in this expanded role as the "Primary Advisor."

What The Primary Advisor Does:

Ideally, each student would be linked with an in-school adult, the Primary Advisor, who is responsible for helping the student design and carry out a Future Options Education Plan (described further in Chapter 5). This Primary Advisor will stick with the student across grades and subject areas. Ideally, this person will also remain as the student's Primary Advisor over several school years, although we recognize that in some systems this will not be possible. Taking this same thought further, a Primary Advisor ought to be in contact with guidance staff at local high schools, so that students' Future Options Plans can be continued after students graduate from the middle-grades.

At the middle level, the Primary Advisor works in partnership with the student, teachers, and school personnel to assure that the student is assessed, and to interpret assessment data.

As we envision it, the Primary Advisor, or somebody to whom s/he delegates the task, spends time with the student, and often with family, reviewing assessment data, and helping the student formulate a Future Options Plan. As part of Plan development, the Primary Advisor works with the student and family to determine which among a variety of single and multi-year activities and services the student needs. S/he also helps the student to determine when and in what order those activities and services should occur, and helps the student find and access those activities and services.

In some schools, the Primary Advisor acts as a broker -- intervening in the school -- advocating and linking to assure that the student's needs are met. The Advisor helps the student access the classes, activities, resources, and services called for in the Future Options Education Plan (described in greater detail in Chapter 5). He or she integrates and coordinates the interventions, and ensures accountability of the student, other advisors, and other school personnel. The Primary Advisor may occasionally need to serve as a problem-solver, intervening at key junctures. Over the long-run, he or she advocates for the student's interests with the school's teaching team, and helps the student adjust to changes in personnel. Ideally, the Primary Advisor also helps assure that everyone's contribution to a given student is driven by a common philosophy.

In the more ambitious Advisory models, the Primary Advisor may also link with a community advocate who can help the student gain access to supports provided by organizations outside the school.

But the Primary Advisor's role doesn't end there. As the student advances through the various aspects of his/her plan, the Primary Advisor monitors, or assures that somebody monitors, the student's progress, and assesses the effectiveness of each intervention. The Advisor offers support, as needed, to help the student succeed; and generally assures that the Future Options Education Plan is thoughtfully revised as circumstances and interests change.

Without this personal, ongoing help, students can too easily "fall between the cracks." Over the long run, a Primary Advisor assures that a safety net is there when needed.

The Primary Advisor often operates as a generalist, alternately serving as a friend, a surrogate parent, a role model, a drill sergeant, a teacher, a crisis counselor. The Primary Advisor may nag, cajole, prod, instruct, and encourage each student who is under his/her wing. S/he may link a student with a teacher in another department, and monitor a young person's relationship with that teacher.

But beyond mediating and representing the interests of a student, the Primary Advisor may also seek to alter the student's behavior, strengthening his/her capacity to exercise self-determination, decision-making and autonomy. To be effective at these functions, the Primary Advisor needs to establish a relationship of partnership and mutual respect with the student. The Primary Advisor helps the student relate actions to outcomes, and expects the student to share the responsibility for carrying out his/her parts of the Plan.

Of course, it would be ideal if each Primary Advisor had only one student with whom s/he played this role; however, we recognize that the logistics of such a small "case-load" would be impractical. Therefore, we recommend that Primary Advisors be assigned responsibility for a reasonable number of students, given local conditions and workloads.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

The case-studies that follow describe a number of middle-grades advisory programs that provide some Future Options Education activities. Although none call the advisor a "Primary Advisor," and although none offer students the complete array of Future Options activities recommended in this handbook, we nevertheless feel that these examples are worthy of attention.

Advisory at Broomfield Heights Middle School
Arvada, Colorado

At Broomfield Heights Middle School the advisory program is called "Reach for the Heights." Each advisor has 20 students, all from the same grade. Students meet with their advisor for 18 minutes each day, and reserve Wednesday and Thursday for structured activity. School counselors, with administrative help, prepare a monthly resource book for this program which includes instruction in decision-making, life skills, and communication.

Source: Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What and How, 1986, by Michael James, published by the National Middle School Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6292.

Putnam County Schools, Winfield, West Virginia

Putnam County, West Virginia reorganized its schools with the goal of enhancing the affective growth and development of children. They created four small middle schools to house grades 6 through 8. Putnam County educators felt that the best way to incorporate an affective curriculum was to have an advisory program. About the same time the West Virginia Department of Education published four objectives for its Middle Childhood Guidance Program. The fourth objective relates directly to Future Options Education: "To assist students in acquiring an awareness of their environment as it related to personal-social, career and academic development." Out of that objective flowed the structured part of the eighth grade advisory program. That program includes separate modules covering decision making related to careers, goal setting, interests related to careers, aptitudes related to careers and relating school subjects to careers along with a module encouraging individual projects.

Source: Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What and How, 1986, by Michael James, published by the National Middle School Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6292.

The Grandparent of All Advisor/Advisee Programs: Shoreham-Wading River Middle School on Long Island, New York

This venerable 18 year-old program is a model of Future Options Education. As described by Gene Maeroff in his March 1990 Phi Delta Kappan article, "Getting To Know A Good Middle School: Shoreham-Wading River," "Shoreham-Wading River is a school in which team teaching is the norm, experiential learning is a hallmark, cooperative learning is widely practiced, teacher participation in decision making is extensive, and teachers lunching with their students is a daily event. Community Service is part of the curriculum, the school has its own small farm on which students work, youngsters take frequent trips to explore career options, almost all classes are heterogeneously grouped, and students almost never cut school."

The advisory system at this school is considered the core principle of the school. The advisory program helps the student look at the total picture while emphasizing consistency, support, and advocacy for the students during the adolescent's period of rapid change. The advisor/students ratio has never been less than one adult for every ten students. Virtually all school staff -- administrative, art, health, physical education and library staff and even the principal -- serve as advisors.

According to Turning Points, the report of The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, "Advisories start the day. The advisor meets with his or her group for 10 minutes before classes begin to discuss school issues and student's activities. This session, similar to the familiar homeroom period, sends the students off to class from a secure and stable base. Students and their advisors meet later in the day for 15 minutes to eat lunch together. Twice a month, advisors meet before classes begin with each student on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Two bus runs each morning ensure that students scheduled for pre-class session can get to school. The sessions offer a chance to discuss academics, projects, home or school problems, or anything that interests the student and advisor."

Advisors are assigned to students for one year, observe students in class and after-school activities and discuss their advisees with other staff and faculty. Advisors meet twice a year with parents to discuss grades and progress in school. Teachers send all grades and comments to students' advisors who collate the information and enter it on report cards. They have a good record of parent interest -- individual parents' meetings with advisors have a 98 percent attendance rate. Advisors are trained and supported by guidance counselors and psychologists. Advisors work as a student's support system, academic advisor, and advocate when misunderstandings or problems occur.

Turning Points, the Carnegie study, evaluates the advisory system as an exemplary way for each young person to develop a supportive relationship with an adult who is not a parent. The system appears to reduce alienation of students and provides each young adolescent with the support of a caring adult who knows that student well. It says, "That bond can make the student's engagement and interest in learning a reality."

The Shoreham-Wading River Central School students sum it up best: "You have someone to tell your problems to." "There are things you just cannot discuss with your parents. You need an advisor." "If we didn't have an advisor, how could we be sure someone would care for us?" "What a pleasure to have a teacher just pay attention to me without anything interfering."

Patapsco Middle School, Ellicott City, Maryland
Teacher Advisory Program

In existence for almost ten years, Patapsco Middle School's Teacher Advisory Program, centers around developing youths competencies in four domains which encompass the developmental needs of the middle school student: self-management, interpersonal relationships, productive use of leisure time and decision-making skills and career education. Patapsco defines competencies as knowledge, attitudes and skills. They firmly believe these competencies can be learned and are a necessary part of any middle school curriculum. The Decision-making and Career Education competencies that students are expected to attain include:

1. Listing the steps in the (occupations) decision making process, appreciating that people select different occupations for various reasons and assessing individual strengths, interests, aptitudes and skills.
2. Knowing the career research process, appreciating the contributions of workers and relating knowledge of personal characteristics to careers of interest.
3. Knowing the laws relating to youth employment, appreciating the importance of equal career opportunity, and researching careers of interest.
4. Identifying skills and attitudes needed to secure a job, accepting that career planning is a life-long process, and applying the steps in the decision-making process in developing tentative educational and career plans and using various resources for locating job and career information.

Each teacher-advisor is responsible for approximately 20 students, all from one grade, meeting with them for 45 minutes twice a week in the general studies class after lunch. Teacher-advisors plan these sessions and under career education would cover topics pertinent to their Decision Making and Career Education domain. Parents of Patapsco students continually comment on the school's caring staff and involvement with students. The school's advisory program contributes to this community feeling and helps bring a sense of unity.

Source: Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What and How, 1986, by Michael James, published by the National Middle School Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6292.

Teachers' Resources.

Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What and How, 1986, by Michael James, published by the National Middle School Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6292.

"Getting to Know A Good Middle School: Shoreham-Wading River." March 1990 Phi Delta Kappa, article by Gene I. Maeroff

Turning Points, Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, The Report of The Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, June 1989, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 11 Dupont Circle NW, Washington DC 20036, (202) 265-9080.

MENTORING MODELS:

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring programs pair individual students with caring, mature adults from the community.

Mentoring is an approach that is increasingly being called upon as a way to fulfill the need for adult support among young people who do not receive adequate guidance from other family or institutional systems. Indeed, mentoring programs are probably the most widely used activity for supporting students who have academic potential but have been identified as "at-risk" of not completing school.

The concept of mentoring is an age-old tradition. In colonial times and even later in America, and for centuries in Europe, townspeople took into their home boys and girls who trained as apprentices in the trades and crafts, servants in the larger homes, and clerks in businesses. It was the responsibility of the people in the community to train the youths and usually to house, feed and clothe them as well. In fact, until about 50 years ago, it was more common than not for families in America to have at least one non-family member living with them. Though seemingly forgotten in recent years, bringing up the young has historically been viewed as a community responsibility.

While not a "required" element of a Future Options Education initiative, mentoring is certainly a strategy worth considering. It can serve as one component in a comprehensive, intensive program of intervention in the lives of adolescent students that helps schools and students meet Future Options Education goals. Mentors supplement and support the work of the Primary Advisor --they do not take the place of this person.

What Do Mentors Do?

A mentor works one-on-one with a student over time, usually with a focus of helping him/her achieve a pre-defined set of goals that are clearly stated at the beginning of the relationship.

Mentoring activities vary depending on the interests, needs, and goals of the students and the mentor. A mentor may work with the student to help overcome barriers that endanger the student's school career or keep him/her from going on to higher education. A mentor may help the student explore careers, or take the student on college visits or to cultural activities. A mentor may offer support, tutoring, guidance and concrete experience to help the student succeed and reach his/her potential in school. Sometimes mentors serve as advocates for students when problems arise that interfere with their school participation.

The mentor and student may meet weekly or monthly, and usually maintain regular telephone contact. There also may be occasional group activities organized by the coordinator of the mentoring program, including "achievement breakfasts" and special occasions to which parents are invited.

What are the Benefits of Mentoring?

Mentoring is an excellent technique for all students, but particularly for disadvantaged young adolescents. It can increase the likelihood that they will stay in school and graduate from high school with a workable, realistic plan for higher education, training, or skilled jobs.

Mentors bring into students' lives a taste of the world outside of home and school along with ideas, stimulation and inspiration that come from an entirely different base of experience. Having a mentor can give an adolescent the confidence to form other relationships with adults and make positive connections with the larger world. Mentees frequently identify with their mentor and, as a result, become able to do for themselves what these older persons have done for them.

This sounds like a powerful way to help young people -- and it is!

Where Are Today's Mentors Found?

While Primary Advisors are most often associated with the school, mentors can be found in businesses, civic and community based organizations, colleges, voluntary agencies, retirement centers, and other local organizations.

Anyone with time for mentoring and a concern for young people can be involved. They usually volunteer or are paid a stipend to help students one-on-one. While it is preferable that mentors be from backgrounds similar to the students with whom they are paired, there have been many successful mentors whose backgrounds differ from the students assigned to them.

Recruitment is often handled through personal contacts and individual referrals -- generally the most time-consuming, but most effective methods. Another effective technique is to find a community leader to "champion" mentoring. Sites with a strong committed champion have a relatively painless time finding a good pool of prospective mentors.

Recruitment works well when a school hooks up with a cohesive adult organization - for example: a local university, a business group, a church group, a civic association, a community-based organization or a professional club. It is crucial that this organization have the commitment and capacity to recruit, train, and match participants. In addition, the organization should monitor their progress and provide support as needed. It is helpful for the organization to have linkages with institutions of higher education, foundations and other community resources.

What Does It Take To Operate an Effective Mentoring Program?

Although mentoring initiatives are not always school-based, one usually finds that in schools, mentoring is a department-, house-or school-wide undertaking. It is not an activity teachers undertake alone. Rather, it is a team effort in which parents, the student's advisor, teachers, the principal and the mentor work together with the student on the student's behalf.

As in any important and large scale partnership, mentoring programs require adequate time for planning tasks such as targeting and enrolling potential students; recruiting, orienting and training potential mentors; and communicating with school officials, including advisors, teachers, and principals. Program start-up also requires close attention to support the mentor-student relationships.

Effective mentoring programs require coordination and training of mentors. They call for communication with the family of each student to ensure that they understand the goal of the mentor relationship and trust the individual with whom their child is paired.

They need to be part of a tightly run, closely monitored program combining in-school learning, orientation to high school and college, and a Primary Advisor who carefully tracks the relationship.

What are the Traits of an Effective Mentor?

There is no single "model" of a "good" mentor. Different mentors have different qualities. Using age as one example:

☐ An older mentor, for example, might be able to offer a mentee a feeling of stability, a sense of history, a sureness of the value of competence. An older person's knowledge of the "ups and downs" of life often gives him/her the ability to help a mentee strive for higher goals even though things seem tough at the moment. An elderly person has been around and can teach a youngster how to navigate through the systems of life. Success with an elder mentor may also empower a student seek out and find other adults who can be helpful.

☐ Middle-aged mentors have generally established themselves in their careers to the extent that they have some control over their schedules and work-place routine. These mentors can bring their mentees into work, show them around, let them follow them around as they work, and involve them in some work activities.

☐ Younger mentors, while lacking the seasoning that comes with age and experience, can often exploit their narrower age differential to develop close rapport with a young adolescent.

Regardless of age or experience, mentors must be carefully screened to ensure they are willing to make the necessary time commitment, that they genuinely like young people and enjoy their company, have good interpersonal skills, patience and persistence, and have a realistic expectation about the experience and the effort required. New mentors need orientation in program objectives and how to work with adolescents.

What Makes A Good Adult Mentor?

- Respect for young people and an understanding of the challenges of their lives in and out of school.
- A personal commitment to do what it takes to insure that the student makes it.
- A willingness to listen and be as non-judgmental as possible, to be there to help solve problems young people encounter along the way to success.
- Openness to learning what life is like from a young person's point of view.
- A concern about the community.

What Keeps Mentors Involved?

Administrators of mentoring programs generally agree that adults continue as mentors far longer if they have:

- Formal training in ways to work with and relate to students;
- On-going support when then run into problems they can't handle; and
- An opportunity to get together with other mentors to share experiences.

Portions of this section were adapted from Connections: Linking Youth With Caring Adults, A Guide to Mentoring, by Joan Walsh, Urban Strategies Council, Oakland, California.

PROGRAM IDEAS:

At Risk Youth Care To Learn When Someone Learns To Care: Milwaukee's One on One Teen Initiative Program

Milwaukee's One on One program is designed to help teens stay in school, improve their educational performance, and expand their career options. A collaborative effort involving the schools, community agencies and business organizations, One on One hopes to make a difference primarily by offering each youngster the support and guidance of a caring adult mentor. The program is based on the philosophy that a significant and sustaining relationship between a mature adult and a young person can "help that teen develop a sense of self-worth, instill values, guide curiosity, and encourage a purposeful life."

Mentors, recruited from the city's business and professional organizations, spend about two hours a week in a variety of activities with the youth such as helping with homework, attending events, or just making sure the youngster gets to school. Mentors are guided in their roles through orientation classes and group sessions with program staff. As one executive summed it up, "Mentoring can make a positive difference in the life of a young student. The One on One experience is significant and worthwhile for our businesses, our volunteers, and our youth."

For more information, contact: Rhonda Taylor, Director, One on One, 101 West Pleasant Street, Suite 102, Milwaukee, WI, 53212, (414) 224-0300. Adapted from article and newsletter re: One on One, Milwaukee's Teen Initiative.

Baltimore's Project RAISE

Although we cannot yet say that it will prove "successful," Baltimore, Maryland's Project RAISE represents an ambitious, innovative model worth looking at. It is a seven-year-long mentoring project designed to ensure high school graduation in 1995 for inner-city sixth graders. Seven local sponsors have each adopted a middle-grades class of 60 students. Sponsors provide each child with an adult mentor in a program of academic and personal development through his/her senior year in high school.

Project RAISE's sponsors are a Catholic women's college, an historically Black college, one White and one Black church, two private businesses, an investment firm, a bank and a Black fraternity. The commitment to matching institutional sponsors with whole classes reflects the project's attempt to build community as well as personal mentoring relationships. Each sponsor has also made a financial commitment to support the program.

The project provides tutoring in basic skills, workshops on careers, leadership, family issues, substance abuse and adolescent sexuality. Contributions support administration, mentor training, and salaries for project staff and site coordinators. The program is administered by the Fund for Educational Excellence, 616 D. North Eutaw Street, Baltimore, MD, (301) 685-8300.

Career Beginnings: A Model High School Program That Can Translate To Middle-Grades Students

Career Beginnings is a mentoring program with specific academic goals. Operating in cities across the country, it is designed to increase the likelihood of "marginally-achieving" high school students participating in some form of post-secondary education or obtaining a good job after graduation. By the end of the 1990 school year, Career Beginnings will have intervened in the lives of 10,000 students.

The program is designed to assist high school juniors and seniors; however, its basic premises are useful for any mentoring program.

Students learn how to identify and pursue career options and opportunities through a program that brings together high schools, businesses and local colleges in working partnerships. It builds on the previously untapped potential of moderately-achieving high school students, and helps them overcome their social and educational deficiencies by exposing them to the college environment and the world of work in personal ways. It works particularly well, for example, with students who are making Cs and some Bs, but who do not test well and are taking general studies courses. In other words, without special efforts and interventions, these youth are unlikely to attend college and achieve their full career potential.

The results for the high school students have been extraordinary with 95 percent graduating from high school and 65 percent attending college.

The Career Beginnings "formula" sounds remarkably like some of the key aspects of Future Options Education, and is well-worth adapting to make it more age-appropriate.

First, students go through a structured series of workshops and classes in career awareness, college preparation, applying for college admission, decision making, communication, and remediation in basic academic skills. To adapt to middle-grades students, one might do basic career awareness, an introduction to college, and age-appropriate basic skills remediation. These interventions have been described in previous chapters.

Second, each student is matched with an adult mentor from the business or professional community. The mentor meets with the student at least once a month to discuss career and college planning. This gives students access to successful adult(s) in their community. Mentors meet with mentees for 18 to 25 months -- often continuing to meet long after high school graduation. This aspect requires little adaptation for middle school youth. Rather than doing college application work, the mentor might try to spur the student on to pursue college, to improve his/her grades, and to enroll in the college preparatory track.

Career Beginnings (Cont.)

Third, students have the opportunity to work in entry-level summer jobs with career potential in the private or public sector. This experience helps them understand the demands of the work-place and gives them an opportunity to earn a regular paycheck. During the summer, work experience is accompanied by at least 30 hours of educational enrichment which helps reduce the learning loss that typically occurs over the summer. Although "real jobs" may not be appropriate for middle-grades students, there are age-appropriate options such as community service, "rent-a-kid" programs, baby-sitting, and other job-related experiences worth investigating.

Fourth, ongoing advising, advocacy and counseling during the school year and the summer keep students focused on the future and working toward goals. Each student has an individualized plan that provides both a tracking mechanism and an early intervention system that triggers immediate action from the local Career Beginnings' staff when problems arise. This aspect of Career Beginnings is appropriate for middle-grades students.

Finally, following high school graduation, the Career Beginnings staff stays in touch with all students to ensure that they are reaching the goals they have set for themselves. We can translate this aspect of Career Beginnings to the transition to high school. Middle-grades personnel can stop viewing their job as "completed" when students move into high school. Perhaps, each middle school should do follow-up to assure that its graduates are actually adapting to, and succeeding in, high school.

For further information, see "Career Beginnings: Helping Disadvantaged Youth Achieve Their Potential," 1989, by William Bloomfield, published by the Phi Beta Kappa Educational Foundation, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana, order Fastback Title #293.

Contact: William Bloomfield, Career Beginnings National Office, Brandeis University, Heller Graduate School, 60 Turner Street, P.O. Box 9110, Waltham, MA 02254-9110, 1-800-343-4705.

"Social Mentoring" At Frick Junior High School, Oakland, California

At Frick Junior High School, Oakland, California, Principal June Jackson started a "social mentoring" program for her female students. Social mentoring programs generally are based on creating relationships for friendship and to broaden a young person's acquaintance with adults. Jackson got an understanding of another Oakland program, the successful "Oakland Scholars- Achievers Program," and thought mentoring would make a difference for her students, many of whom come from single-parent homes, move a lot, and live disrupted lives. She wanted them to have a relationship with someone who would be an anchor.

She worked with a civic group, Black Women Organized for Educational Development. Delta Sigma Theta sorority has since joined the program which has been in operation for several years now and has over 50 matches. Jackson recommends group sponsorship because it gives the mentors more of a sense of ownership, and develops a sense of community and mutual assistance among the mentors.

This program description was drawn from "Connections: Linking Youth With Caring Adults: A Guide To Mentoring," 1989, by the Urban Strategies Council of Oakland, California, written by Joan Walsh, Urban Strategies Council, Thornton House, 672 13th Street, Oakland, CA 94612, (415) 893-2404.

For further information, contact: June Jackson, Principal, Frick Junior High School, 2845 64th Avenue, Oakland, CA 94606, (415) 562-6565, or Dezie Wood-Jones, Executive Director, Black Women Organized for Educational Development, 518 17th Street, Suite 202, Oakland, CA 94612, (415) 763-9501.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America Mentoring Middle-Schoolers

Through their One-With-One career exploration program, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America are matching junior high and high school age youth with adult volunteers based on the youth's career interests. Mentors give practical advice and provide a first-hand experience exploring a professional or career field. Local Clubs collaborate with schools and provide parents with the information and assistance they need to become involved in their children's career exploration and planning.

In places like Ft. Worth, Texas; Bay City, Michigan; San Francisco, California; and Tampa, Florida; youngsters who dream of becoming doctors, lawyers, jet pilots or business people are paired with professionals in those fields. The program shows youngsters that they can achieve, while also exposing them to the hard work and study required to reach these goals.

For further information, contact: Jeannine Bokor, Director, Career Exploration Program, Boys' Clubs of America, 771 First Avenue, New York, NY 10017, (212) 351-5900. Adapted from Operation Manual, One With One Program; and from "Program Gives Young a Handhold Up". Star-Telegram, Fort Worth, TX (1/31/87).

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSING STUDENTS

CHAPTER 4:

ASSESSING STUDENTS

"How do we determine what kinds of help the student needs and wants, and where and how do we collect the data to enable them and us to make intelligent choices about the future?"

Assessment is the key.

WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Assessment is an ongoing process of questioning and communication involving strategies such as gathering existing data, testing, interviewing, and observing.

A thorough assessment enables the student, his/her teachers, the Primary Advisor, and all of the other stakeholders to understand where the student is starting from, and to measure how s/he is progressing at any point in time. Through ongoing assessment, key adults can hear, see, and sense a student's situation. They learn who the student is, what strengths can be worked with, what vulnerabilities must be compensated for, and what progress is being made. The responses to such information can then be tailor-made to that particular student.

Assessment is generally performed at the outset, to determine "Where do we start with this particular student?" As time passes and activities are completed, further assessment can provide information such as, "Where is the student now and what progress has been made?" In other words, assessment reflects the student's situation at the time of the assessment. It also acknowledges that the student's situation will probably change frequently.

Let's be candid about assessment -- it is an art rather than a science. All assessment techniques have their limitations, and that must be understood up front. In fact, psychometricians spend their lives trying to develop accurate assessment instruments. We're not suggesting that a Future Options assessment must be a burdensome task undertaken by skilled psychometricians. Rather, it is a useful tool to help plan for future career and higher education options.

The determination of who handles which aspects of assessment must be made locally. Often, it will be handled by more than one player. We would suggest, therefore, that the student's Primary Advisor coordinate the various assessment processes and be ultimately responsible for assuring that a thorough assessment gets done.

We also feel strongly that a Future Options Plan (see Chapter 5) should not be developed until a knowledgeable adult has reviewed and interpreted assessment data with the student, and the student has concurred that it presents a relatively representative and accurate picture.

WHERE DO WE GET ASSESSMENT DATA?

Students will be the primary source of information about themselves. They can be talked to informally or interviewed formally. Students can be tested and questioned. Teachers are another major source of information, since they observe the student regularly in classroom and group activities.

Assessment can be fun too. Much information can be gathered through structured exercises, group discussions, and other classroom activities that focus on future issues.

In addition, much useful information about the adolescent may be gathered through:

☐ personal discussions and interviews;
☐ talks with teachers;
☐ opinions of teachers and teaching teams;
☐ input from other knowledgeable adults;
☐ verbal and written reports;
☐ self-awareness classroom/group exercises;
☐ values clarification classroom/group exercises;
☐ analysis/feedback of assessments to students to check validity and revise as needed; and
☐ parental input.

WHAT DOES AN ASSESSMENT REVEAL?

A comprehensive Future Options Education assessment might seek information on issues such as the student's:

☐ short- and long-term goals;
☐ knowledge of the labor market;
☐ knowledge of the realities of post-secondary education;
☐ knowledge of post-high-school training opportunities;
☐ educational strengths and needs;
☐ talents and interests;
☐ existing support network and environmental barriers;
☐ needs for help from the human service system.

Of course, the extensiveness and comprehensiveness of the assessment process can be determined by each school according to available resources and time. Following is an assessment guide, containing suggested questions based upon the aforementioned comprehensive list of categories.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR MIDDLE-GRADES STUDENTS

Short- and Long-Term Goals:

We can assume that nearly all middle-grades students will benefit from activities that "broaden their horizons" -- introducing them to options they didn't know existed, creating new dreams, and putting current ones into perspective. To provide a feel for how extensive interventions for a student must be, assessment might include questions such as:

☐ What are the student's dreams?
☐ What does the student want to do with his or her life?
☐ What "little things" and "big things" does s/he want? Do they have to be obtained now? Can they wait and, if so, for how long?
☐ Does the student include a skilled job and/or post-high-school education/training among his/her long-term goals? If not, why?
☐ How did the student develop these ideas?
☐ What interventions would help expand the student's dreams and/or bring reality to unrealistic ones?

Knowledge of the Labor Market:

Most young adolescents have little understanding about opportunities available to them in the adult labor market, and about the relationship between education and job prospects. Some may have parents who do not work. Their own occupational knowledge may derive primarily from television (and hence may assume, for example, that hospital careers are limited to doctor, nurse, housekeeper, and orderly, etc.).

Those middle-grades youth with "traditional" work experience have usually done baby-sitting, delivered newspapers, mowed lawns, or other had other temporary "ad hoc" jobs -- none of which provide much in the way of introductions to the adult labor market. Unfortunately, some young adolescents have had significant experience with "non-traditional jobs" in the underground economy (drug-dealing, selling "hot" goods, etc.) -- experiences that may provide transferable skills, but are not the types of adult jobs we'd like them to pursue.

Assessment can help us understand what young people perceive about the labor market, their place in it, and the role of education in their lives. From this information, we can help students make educated, non-limiting decisions about their futures. Toward this end, assessment can investigate questions such as:

☐ What is the student's perception of why people work?
☐ What does the student consider to be a "good" job after high school? Does the student consider such a job to be a viable goal? Why or why not?

☐ What vocational and career interests does the student express? Does the student relate these interests to other aspects of his/her life?
☐ Are these interests realistic?
☐ What additional skills are needed?
☐ What employment experiences or knowledge does the student have?
☐ If the student could assume that s/he could be hired in the job of his/her dreams, what would that job be? Why?
☐ What does the student think "work" is all about?
☐ Does the student view people who go to work in good jobs each day to be "different" from him/her? In what ways?
☐ Does the student know about traditional work environments and expectations? Does s/he understand how aspects of school relate to those environments?
☐ Does the student understand that the academic tracks available in the middle-grades or high school may affect his/her chances to obtain a good job?
☐ Does the student understand what it will take to advance through academic tracks from where s/he is to where s/he might wish to be?
☐ Does the student grasp how his/her current actions, choices, and/or decisions may affect his/her chances for a good job after high school?
☐ What interventions would help expand the student's labor market understanding or goals, and/or bring reality to unrealistic views?

Knowledge of the Realities of Post-Secondary Education and Training:

We know that many students assume that college or post-high-school training are out of the question. We also know that a goodly percentage of these students shouldn't make this assumption. Other students say that they want to go to college, but haven't the faintest idea about what it takes to do so. If we are to enable young people to realistically pursue their potential, we need to intervene. Assessment can enable us to know what types of interventions each student needs. We can ask questions such as:

☐ Does the student assume that s/he will eventually pursue education or training after high school?
☐ If the student could assume that s/he would attend college or other training, what subject area would s/he pick? Why?
☐ Does the student understand what must be done during middle-grades and high school in order to make pursuit of post-high- school education or training possible?
☐ If the student assumes that s/he will not pursue education after the middle-grades or high school, why not?
☐ How does the student view "education in general?"
☐ What does the student think post-secondary education is like?
☐ Does the student think that students who pursue education or training after high school are "different" from him/her? In what ways?
☐ Does the student know how the post-secondary environment and expectations differ from the middle-grades, from high school?
☐ Is the student aware of what colleges or training schools look for when considering an application for admission?
☐ Are the student and his/her family aware that financial aid may be available for a college education or training after high school?

- ☐ Does the student understand how his/her choice of high school will affect his/her future?
- ☐ Does the student understand that the academic tracks available in the middle-grades or high school may affect his/her chances to attend college or other training?
- ☐ Does the student understand what it will take to advance through academic tracks from where s/he is to where s/he might wish to be?
- ☐ Does the student grasp how his/her current actions, choices, and/or decisions may affect his/her chances for a college education or post-secondary training down the road?
- ☐ What interventions would help expand the student's understanding of post-secondary education or training?
- ☐ What interventions would help the student develop realistic goals toward post-secondary education or training, and/or bring reality to unrealistic views?

Educational Strengths and Needs:

If a student is to eventually attain the goal of a skilled job or education/training after high school, s/he will need to pursue and achieve (at both the middle-grades and high school levels) a course of study leading to that goal. Assessment can help identify what the student will have to do during the middle-grades years to open, or keep open, these post-secondary options. Questions such as those which follow will help:

- ☐ What has been the student's educational history?
- ☐ Could specific interventions assist a student to pursue post- secondary education or training if, at present, s/he is not considering either to be an option?
- ☐ Is the student receiving educational content that will allow for access to knowledge that will lead to post-secondary education or training if s/he so chooses?
- ☐ Could the student obtain a skilled job after high school graduation if s/he continues performing (academically and otherwise) as s/he has so far, and in the course of study s/he is in? If not, what academic (or other) interventions would it take to change this?
- ☐ How long would any needed academic interventions take, what would they require, and where would they lead?
- ☐ How is the student's attendance?
- ☐ Where is s/he strong?
- ☐ In what subjects is help needed?
- ☐ How does s/he learn?
- ☐ What problems, if any, have cropped up? When?
- ☐ Do patterns emerge in the relationship of the participant to teachers and school authorities?
- ☐ What interventions would help expand the student's understanding of his/her educational strengths or needs?

Talents and Interests:

Most young people are armed with an array of talents, although many may be unrecognized or dormant. Assessment can identify some of these, and may reveal previously unknown strengths enroute to helping a young person pursue new and exciting goals. Questions such as the following may identify important talents or interests:

☐ What has the young person been doing, so far, to "get by" in the world?
☐ What is s/he proud of?
☐ What is s/he good at?
☐ What hobbies does s/he have?
☐ What excites him/her?
☐ How do these skills or interests relate to his/her goals?
☐ Are there skills or interests that s/he would like the opportunity to develop further in some way?

Existing Support Network and Environmental Barriers:

Young adolescents need the support and guidance of adults and peers to recognize and pursue their full potential. Certainly some of this can come from the school system; however, as we all know, the schools can't do it alone.

A solid assessment process identifies adults and peers who can play a positive role in the Future Options Education process, and pinpoints negative environmental influences. Questions such as the following should be asked:

☐ Who does the student admire and/or turn to for help?
☐ Who are available role models?
☐ What is the young person's support system -- siblings, extended family, boy/girlfriends, other close friends?
☐ What type of relationships exist in this "family?"
☐ Did any "family" members or available role models attend college?
☐ Can the "family" or available role models be counted upon to support the student's post-high-school goals?

Similarly, negative influences in the "support system" should be identified. Often these people or their opinions can be "turned around" or offset. Hence the following questions apply:

☐ Does the student say, "Why should I bother with school?" If so, why?
☐ Who or what in the young person's life is telling him/her that s/he shouldn't bother with education or pursue his/her dreams?
☐ What environmental factors seem more attractive than traditional routes to success?
☐ Is there regular conflict within the "family?"
☐ Is a "family" intervention needed?
☐ What are the objections to the student's post-high-school advancement?

Needs for Help from the Human Service System (optional to FOE):

Some young adolescents face obstacles to personal fulfillment that require interventions from organizations or professionals outside the school. Assessment can pinpoint these situations, and can contribute to significantly improved school performance among young people who are given outside help. Questions such as the following can help identify non-school barriers to success:

- ☐ Are there any major problems that must be overcome before other work becomes possible (crisis intervention)?
- ☐ Is the student eating appropriately?
- ☐ Does the student reside in "livable" shelter?
- ☐ Does the student demonstrate basic personal hygiene?
- ☐ Does the student need help with medical, vision, hearing, dental, and/or mental health check-ups and treatment?
- ☐ Does the student need assistance to deal with the effects and treatment of any existing medical condition?
- ☐ Does the student need prescription drugs?
- ☐ If the student is sexually active, does s/he understand and use appropriate birth control techniques?
- ☐ Does the student abuse alcohol or drugs?
- ☐ Is the student aware of the dangers of AIDS and how it is transmitted?
- ☐ Does an adjudicated student have access to, and use, a lawyer to handle any outstanding issues with the juvenile justice system? Has s/he maintained regular contact with probation or other court officers as part of his or her sentencing? Has s/he worked toward any sentencing requirements tied to court involvement?
- ☐ Which institutions has the student attended previously?

CHAPTER 5

THE FUTURE OPTIONS PLAN

CHAPTER 5:

THE FUTURE OPTIONS PLAN

> *"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to walk from here?"*
> *"That depends a great deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.*
> *"I don't much care where --" said Alice.*
> *"Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat.*
> *"-- so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.*
> *"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk far enough."*
> Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

If students don't know where they are going, how will they know when they've arrived? It makes sense to help them plan beforehand what general -- usually VERY general -- direction they might want to go, and why. They need to consider the road-maps and other tools they may need along the way. We believe that good Future Options Education requires a formal plan. But we understand that some of you may disagree, and be concerned about the paperwork involved.

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION CALLS FOR A PLAN

Development of a plan during the early adolescent years shouldn't imply "steering" kids into careers prematurely. The existence of a Future Options Plan doesn't imply that students can't change course, take alternate routes, or explore the terrain. It just means that they, rather than flailing around, need some general sense of direction and purpose for their actions and activities. They need some future goal, no matter how vague. They need a sense of what to expect along the way in terms of obstacles and hazards, safe harbors, passageways, and resting spots.

The simplest way to set a direction and chart a course is to develop a plan -- one with the flexibility needed to address young adolescents' ever-changing needs and interests. This plan then forms the foundation for a successful Future Options Education program.

The premise for this chapter might well be, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." A comprehensive Future Options Education intervention begins with a plan for each student.

This chapter considers what this plan is, why it is needed, when it is developed, how it is developed, and how to get started.

IT'S ALL IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

We know that the issue of developing a plan for a middle school student is fraught with challenges. We are aware that the admonition to develop a plan is easier said than done. Who develops the plan? Who tracks progress? Who has access to the information? How do you ensure confidentiality, and yet ensure that the important information reaches the parties who may be able to help the student? How do you keep it from becoming a bureaucratic paper exercise? How do you keep the plan from "tracking" the student toward certain options, and precluding others? All of these questions and concerns are very real -- they are all matters to be worked out in implementation. And, solutions abound.

We don't think that these problems -- challenges, really, for you to solve -- should stop us from implementing a Future Options Education Plan for each child. The rewards, in our opinion, outweigh the potential costs and inconveniences.

WHAT IS A FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION PLAN?

In our ideal model, a Future Options Plan (hereafter known as the "Plan") is a comprehensive, ever-changing document that flows directly from regular assessments of the student. It translates assessment data into a strategically sequenced series of action steps. A well-formulated Plan details a series of mutual, coordinated actions on the part of the student and several supportive adults that exploit the student's strengths and overcome his/her deficits on the way to meeting the student's goals.

Ideally, a comprehensive Future Options Plan is developed by a team that includes not only the student and his/her Primary Advisor, but also teachers, counselors, family members, and other key individuals (mentors, role models, valued peers, etc.).

With input from these people, the Plan establishes individualized, age- and stage-appropriate interventions that address a variety of students' needs, and assure continuity between the middle-grades and high school. The Plan defines through what means and over what period of time action steps will be implemented. It also identifies who will be responsible for carrying out and monitoring its various components.

With well-formulated Future Options Plans to guide them, an increased number of middle-grades students will possess the hope and means to enter the tenth grade seeking and prepared to pursue post-secondary education or training, or a skilled job after high school graduation.

The goals of a comprehensive Future Options Plan tie directly back to assessment, and might include:

☐ identifying and developing short- and long-term goals;
☐ enhancing knowledge of the labor market;
☐ enhancing knowledge of post-secondary education and training;
☐ developing educational strengths and overcoming needs;
☐ identifying and supporting talents and interests;

- ☐ utilizing existing support networks and overcoming environmental barriers;
- ☐ identifying needs for help from the human service system, and linking the student with that system's resources;
- ☐ revising everything above as changes occur.

WHEN SHOULD THE PLAN BE DEVELOPED?

Ideally, development of the Future Options Plan starts when a student enters the middle-grades. However, the Plan is not set in stone. It must be flexible. The Plan must be reviewed and revised regularly to allow for the many changes that can be expected as the student learns more, advances, overcomes barriers, encounters hindered by barriers, or alters his/her goals.

The Plan doesn't stop at the end of the middle-grades. It needs to look at the transition to high school too.

WHAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE PLAN?

A Future Options Plan may include items such as:

- ☐ the student's goals, strengths, interests, and limitations;
- ☐ knowledge-enhancement activities pertaining to skilled jobs and post-secondary education or training;
- ☐ exploratory activities that allow the student to grow, and contribute to changes in the Plan;
- ☐ other resources, classes, interventions, and activities that the student has chosen to assist him/her reach goals;
- ☐ the individual(s) or organization(s) that will provide those resource, classes, interventions, or activities;
- ☐ starting dates, times, ongoing schedules, locations, etc. of activities or services in which the student will participate;
- ☐ an orientation to local high school offerings;
- ☐ the tasks and responsibilities of the student;
- ☐ the tasks and responsibilities of the Primary Advisor;
- ☐ the tasks and responsibilities of parents, family members, and significant others;
- ☐ the tasks and responsibilities of teachers;
- ☐ the tasks and responsibilities of other individuals at the middle-grades level;
- ☐ a "pick-up" person at the high school level;
- ☐ skills the student must learn if s/he is to take control of his/her Plan while reducing dependence upon the Advisor;
- ☐ the sequence in which activities or interventions should take place;
- ☐ a schedule for subsequent contacts between Primary Advisor, student, parents, and others;
- ☐ a schedule upon which the Plan will be reviewed;
- ☐ an agreement about what happens if one of the parties breaks his/her end of the contract;

☐ rewards, incentives, or celebrations that acknowledge achievement of goals.
☐ an agreement with high schools to "pick-up" the Plan when a student moves on to the high school of his/her choice.

HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT THE PLAN REFLECTS AVAILABLE RESOURCES?

It's easy, and very dangerous, to develop a "pie-in-the-sky" Plan that has no ties to reality. It is crucial that the person(s) who work with the student to develop the Plan clarify:

☐ which activities, programs, and other interventions are and are not available;
☐ which goals, interests, and barriers identified during assessment can be overcome through available means;
☐ which goals, interests, and barriers identified during assessment cannot be overcome through available means;
☐ which means might be "custom-developed" to meet the student's interests and aspirations if those means do not already exist.

HOW DO WE ENGAGE STUDENTS IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION?

Some middle-grades students will be excited about Future Options Education and development of a Future Options Plan. On the other hand, there will be others who, for good reason, will view a Future Options Plan as one more in a string of nonsense steps that lead nowhere. They will not automatically treat the Plan seriously.

This cynicism can and should be overcome through involvement and ownership. A student will be motivated to channel his/her energy into the Future Options Plan over the long-term only if the student feels that the Plan is his or hers. It must sufficiently represent his/her personal self-interest. It cannot be a paper exercise where the adults maintain control and "do to" the student.

The student must play an active, empowered role -- identifying and selecting available resources, programs, and activities that lead to his/her personal goals. For a student to make an informed decision about these interventions, the advisor should discuss and seek consensus on each aspect of the Plan:

☐ the types of activities, resources, or services available;
☐ how they relate to the student's goals;
☐ what makes each option unique -- pros and cons;
☐ the location and schedule of each option;
☐ available slots/enrollment availability;
☐ possible delays in entry to each option;
☐ the time involved in completing each option;
☐ eligibility requirements;
☐ special circumstances (language barriers, transportation, etc.).

Making things even more complex, the student is not the only key player in the deal. Other players will need to be involved to assure that somebody helps the student set goals and objectives, and undertake a systematic process of meeting those goals. It is important that the student and all other parties understand their roles and responsibilities in carrying out the Future Options Plan. Therefore, when the student, his/her Primary Advisor, his/her parents, and other key individuals have discussed and agreed upon a series of action steps, the Plan should be signed by all as if it were a contract. This Contract may be a separate document, or may merely be signatures by all parties on the bottom of the Plan itself. This step helps ensure clarity, accountability, and mutuality. Inherent in the contract should be agreement about what happens if the Plan falls apart or if the contract is broken.

Once the student has made his/her decisions, the advisor helps to gain access to the chosen options, and makes referrals to other organizations if necessary. After a student has been placed into an activity, program, or service, the advisor monitors the placement to assure that it satisfies the goals set forth in the student's Future Options Plan. If the student is unable to achieve the specified goals through the placement, the advisor helps to review and adjust the Plan.

Our emphasis on an upfront plan for each young person reflects our belief that some explicit direction, even if it changes frequently, is better than none at all. A Future Options Education Plan is probably the most difficult aspect of Future Options Education. Because we understand the difficulty, we would like to hear from principals, teachers, advisors, counselors, and parents about your experiences in developing FOE Plans for students.

CHAPTER 6

COMPREHENSIVE FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION INITIATIVES

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COMPREHENSIVE FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION INITIATIVES

"Fine, you've given me a bunch of good ideas, examples of programs and interventions that make up individual components of Future Options Education. Isn't anyone taking on the whole task? Show me that it's possible to 'do the right thing!'"

There are some middle schools where Future Options Education is pretty much the norm. Several come to mind, and are described here:

☐ The Unified School District in Richmond, California's Five Future Studies Schools;
☐ The Lowell (Massachusetts) City Magnet School, the Nation's only Micro-Society School; and
☐ The Chiron Middle School in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

These are not middle schools that learned about our notion of Future Options Education, and decided to try it. Rather, they had already figured out that, to achieve their full potential, young adolescents need certain basics, and they figured out how to provide them. These basics included:

☐ personalized assistance by adults both in school and outside;

☐ individualized learning plans geared to students' special needs, interests, and aptitudes;

☐ a range of age- and stage- appropriate programs and supportive interventions to provide experiential learning; and

☐ involvement of community resources to broaden students' horizons, and to expand their future options for higher education and solid careers.

Sounds like Future Options Education, whether they called it that or not!

These examples may be more than the average school "doing business as usual" could handle. But they illustrate the possibilities. Moreover, parts of what they are doing may be exportable to other, more traditional settings. They generate excitement for their communities, their teachers and administrators, their benefactors, and most important, their beneficiaries -- the students and families they serve.

THE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IN RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Once the Bay Area's educational step-child, the Unified School District in Richmond, serving a population of nearly 30,000 students, had dropout rates approaching 50 percent. Its teaching staff was so demoralized that attrition had become epidemic. The community had nearly given up hope, and the school system was at the point of educational meltdown.

Today, Richmond is in the early stages of a renaissance. Under a new system of choice, an innovative approach to student motivation and learning, Richmond has become the first district in the state to designate all of its 47 schools as Speciality Schools. Among these are five Future Studies Schools.

Programs here are explicitly aimed at "helping students learn positive ways to adapt to and influence an uncertain, changing future." Each year, teachers and principals at the building level adopt an overall theme which is applied to core curriculum subjects and other courses. Through quarterly sub-themes, a complex subject like "interdependency" is explored in various settings and manifestations -- family life, social and political groupings, animals, etc. In tracing out the interconnections, and distilling underlying patterns, children apply reading, math, science, history, social studies and the arts to their future interests.

Three essential elements describe the Future Studies approach:

☐ **The Inquiry Method.** Instead of being passive spectators, youth are encouraged to be active learners. In a three-step process, they first embark on a fact-finding mission where data are collected. Second, they come together as a group to sort through evidence which has been retrieved. Third, they propose their own theories to support particular conclusions and solutions.

☐ **Problem Solving.** Students are taught to define problems, organize their thoughts logically, and see that often there is not only one "right" answer to an important question.

☐ **Cooperative Learning.** This method assigns each child a role in contributing to the success of collective inquiry. Through this process, students develop skills in listening, taking turns, being considerate, and respecting each other as well as themselves.

This is a model of learning that will be well-suited to all Future Options Education programming.

Each school begins the day with "What If" sessions. Students are encouraged to use the full scope of their imaginations to probe the possible and the impossible. For example, the teacher might pose these questions:

☐ What if we lived to be 200 years old?
☐ How do you become a nuclear engineer?

Future Studies employs a six-part teaching program integrating all skills and requirements which are traditionally kept discrete. The underlying premise of this "thematic curriculum" is that knowledge development is a dynamic process of intellectual and social exploration.

The six elements of the curriculum are:

☐ **Finding Information:** through reading, listening, seeing, experimenting, and through direct retrieval from such resources as libraries, computers, publications and outside adults.

☐ **Logical Thinking:** through mathematics, analytic problem solving, and the scientific and inquiry method.

☐ **Communicating Effectively:** through formal and informal speaking, various stages of drafting and writing, and visual arts.

☐ **Understanding the Environment:** through the biological and physical sciences, and examining ecological issues.

☐ **Discovering Other Cultures:** through examination of history, government, economics, educational systems, occupations and future choices for humanity.

☐ **Developing Personal Competence:** through art, music, drama, dance, conflict resolution, self-knowledge, and values clarification.

An important part of each Futures specialty school is the Futures Center -- a multi-media resource laboratory where students use computers, media equipment, and books to perform research, conduct experiments, create projects about the present and the future, and about links between the two.

An Example of the Future Studies Curriculum as a Student Might Experience It:

Michael's class is studying "home building" as a topic within the yearly theme of "interdependence." In the first quarter of the school year, students focus on homes of the present in California.

☐ In Step 1, the class brainstorms all possible types of homes in their community (apartments, condos, flats, houses, mobile homes, rooming houses, etc.)

☐ In Step 2, the class discusses why we have different types of homes, what kinds of homes are needed by Californians and why, and how homes meet these needs. Michael works with a cooperative learning group of four students to identify possible needs a home meets, and how various types of homes meet these needs. Later, groups share their work with the whole class, and students realize that more information is needed. Michael's group decides to find out about the new housing development in the neighborhood: why and how it was built, and who lives there. Students decide what questions they will ask, and who they will interview (residents, developers, architects, managers, zoning officials, etc.).

☐ In Step 3, Michael and a partner visit the Futures Center to write interview questions on the word processor. Members of the group have their own copies. Using photos they took earlier, the other groups plan together to build models of the housing development. Some make sketches, others list the materials they need, and still others read how blueprints are made. While Michael's group is working in the Center, so are other students -- one group uses the laser video-disc player to find pictures of various architectural styles from the National Art Archives; students in the computer area use a graphics program to draft their blueprint; nearby, another group builds Styrofoam models of future homes. Activities in the Futures Center are high-tech, and high-touch.

At the end of the quarter, the students share their models and present a report using the photos and the results of their interviews. The purpose of the exercise was to make students comfortable with change, to give them a sense that social systems and knowledge are constantly evolving. The emphasis was on questioning, exploration, and experimentation. The problems were defined by the students, and the solutions were developed and tested by the students.

For further information, contact Dr. Walter L. Marks, Superintendent, Unified School District, 1108 Bissell Avenue, Richmond, California 94804, (415) 234-3825, ext. 2004.

CITY MAGNET SCHOOL, LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS: THE NATION'S ONLY MICRO-SOCIETY SCHOOL

Now about five years old, this magnet school in the middle of downtown Lowell is the site of a creative and ambitious undertaking. Students participate in a miniature society where they run their own court system, businesses, law firms, publishing companies and police force. While the school's first job is teaching basic skills, it attempts to do this job in a very different way. Every student must "work" and participate in the decision-making bodies that shape the future of the City School, striving to make it a mirror of society and a model of participatory democracy.

As a magnet school that reserves 40 percent of its slots for minority students, everyone at the school -- students, parents, teachers and the principal -- is a volunteer, choosing to be there, and agreeing with the school's philosophy. With help and guidance from teachers, students design and run a democratic, free-market society. Over the past five years, students have set up their own government, creating legislative, executive, and judicial branches. They have written and continually revise, amend, and update a school constitution and laws. They have set up their own courts and system of justice, a system of taxation through their own internal revenue service, an elected legislature, and even a lottery to supplement tax revenues.

The school is divided into three clusters -- primary (K-2), intermediate (grades 3-5) and senior (grades 6-8). Each cluster has its own form of local self-government. The students have created an economy and currency (called Morgans instead of dollars, named for a previous Superintendent). The students run their own banks, have bank accounts, and run numerous businesses that have real jobs. Everyone gets paid for doing these jobs.

To learn what they need to do these jobs, students must "go to school." They must take classes, study, and pass "competency exams" before they can hold jobs. For instance, to get a job in a bank or to start a business, students must pass the banking and accounting competency exam. To get a job on a newspaper or magazine, students must pass the publishing exam. Before graduating, students must pass all of the competency exams. Skills acquired in the classes are practiced and put to use in their micro-society, cementing the learning and promoting the acquisition of more complex and advanced skills.

In any one day, a visitor is likely to find an authenticity mirroring the real world outside:

> On a Tuesday afternoon, the senior cluster court is in session. The case being heard is an alleged bank robbery, in which one male student working in the school office appeared with a large roll of crisp, new Morgans, which he shared with two friends who then sold the Morgans for real money. The case is being tried by the judge (an eighth-grade boy) rather than by the more usual jury system. The judge listened to the prosecutors attempting to establish that a crime had been committed, heard the defense claim that there were no laws against selling Morgans for money, read the Constitution and the laws, and found the defendants innocent, but urged that the Legislature pass a law defining the selling of Morgans as a crime. The defendants celebrated their victory with backslapping, and then filed a civil suit against the school and the Principal for false arrest.

And, in another "real world" scenario ...

On one Monday, the Legislature was wrestling with a major financial crisis. The government had run out of money, because of a decision made several weeks prior that the "welfare" problem could be solved by a student loan program instituted to help some 15 to 18 students who couldn't pass their competency exams, couldn't get paying jobs, and therefore couldn't pay taxes. The Legislature considered the options -- institute a welfare program (rejected because students would have no motivation to pass their exams if paid by the government); create a "workfare" program to create various minimum salary menial jobs (rejected because such make-work would interfere with studies); or institute a student loan program (the solution accepted). Now, faced with the problem of how to finance the loan program, the representatives faced the decision of raising taxes (which they vowed not to do if elected!) or lowering government salaries and putting limits on the loan program. By the end of the day, they had authorized the government to borrow 4,500 Morgans to pay the government workers so they could pay taxes; wrangled over which bank to use for the loan (choosing the one with the lowest interest rate) and considered a corporate tax on the micro-society businesses to help fund the new budget deficit.

The school has been developing its curriculum and its philosophy over many years, adapting its governance and its program as needed. The process of participation in the governance, the ownership and excitement generated by shared governance, and the high level of support and participation by parents, indicate that the school is on the right track. It has a long waiting list of families who wish to enroll their students.

The micro-society approach was invented by George Richmond (The Micro-Society School: A Real World in Miniature (Harper & Row, 1973) who piloted the program in a number of locations in and around New York City. Richmond aims to transform the stultifying world of the school and to involve students fully in "the real world." Says Richmond, "The process must have the power to penetrate the classroom and alter its way of life. And although the connection with work bears emphasis, the model must also offer students opportunities to become involved in academic pursuits, in recreation, in civic projects, and other productive activity. ...If this model had heroes, they might be called entrepreneurs."

For more information, contact Robert Weintraub, Principal, City Magnet School, 43 French Street, Lowell, MA 01843, (617) 454-5431.

Portions excerpted or adapted from Chapter 8, "City Magnet School, Lowell, in Equity and Choice, May 1, 1986, pp. 67-75.

THE CHIRON MIDDLE SCHOOL IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

One of the first "charter" schools in the country, Chiron (pronounced KY-ron, and named for the last planet discovered, and for the wise centaur in Greek mythology who taught other gods) has been given three years to try out an alternative form of education for grades 5 through 8, using its own approach to meeting district learning goals, parent and community resources, and unusual sites in the community as the actual school. The school district "chartered" a group of teachers to put together their own school, make curriculum decisions, team-teach, and participate in school management. Championed by AFT President, Albert Shanker, this school's approach has the support of the union, as a way to foster professional development, cooperative learning, coaching, and perhaps a totally new alternative way to provide education.

Spearheaded by Minneapolis real estate developer, Ray Harris, the school is a public/private partnership with an emphasis on the real world. Students have been to a juvenile court for a discussion of law and government, to the Dome Stadium to talk about different types of jobs and what it takes to get games to happen at night, to the cornfields of the farm campus to learn math by counting and averaging using cornstalks. The students are excited about participating in action-oriented, experiential learning. Activities in arts, music, and dance are linked to basic skills such as reading, writing and math. Students also develop higher-order skills such as interviewing, notetaking, analysis, comparison, and evaluation.

Anchored at three different sites within the community, Chiron uses a downtown site to explore business, law and government, an environmental site with a science focus, and a visual and performing arts site with a fine arts focus.

Chiron's 120 fifth and sixth graders mingle in three non-graded groups, which move from site to site in 12-week shifts. Each site takes responsibility for different aspects of the curriculum, using district texts as guides. Teachers work with each child and his or her parents to identify the student's interests and learning styles and develop an individualized "Family Learning Plan," (similar to the concept of the Future Options Education Plan mentioned in this publication). Under a site-based management plan, Chiron staff work with parent committees to run the school. The school board gave the school a lump-sum budget, allowing it to decide where to spend its resources.

Although Chiron students take required district-wide tests, staff and parents are working with University of Minnesota faculty to devise new ways to evaluate students. Students might compile portfolios or produce videotapes to demonstrate their proficiency in various areas. Learning will be measured by individual progress toward district learning outcomes in each student's personal learning plan. Students and parents will meet with teachers at least four times a year to discuss progress.

This student/parent/community partnership applies most of the principals of Future Options Education. Students interact with the community through community service projects, working with mentors, and serving apprenticeships -- all Future Options Education interventions. The school uses an individualized Family Learning Plan. It calls on parents, mentors and other community resources to provide a nurturing, individualized environment. It takes advantage of the lessons and resources available in the real world, and challenges students experientially with real world situations, rather than in disconnected classrooms.

For further information about Chiron, contact: Dr. Kathleen Burke, Chiron School, 25 N. 16th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55403, (612) 332-6311.

Portions of this case study were excerpted or adapted from several newspaper articles. (See, for example, Mary Jane Smetanka's article, "At Chiron, learning is a hands-on experience," from the Monday, October 16, 1989 Star Tribune; and an article by Priscilla Nemeth, "The school that's heaven.")

CHAPTER 7

ORGANIZING A FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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"O.K. I've bought in to your premise that young adolescents need Future Options Education. Now, how do we get started? What kinds of plans do we need, and how much is this going to cost?"

Regardless of whether one is attempting to develop a very basic Future Options Education initiative, or a more comprehensive model, the following recommendations hold true. They also appear equally applicable to activities that are oriented to college, post-high-school vocational training, or employment. These recommendations are adapted from a national review of post-secondary education awareness activities by the Higher Education Information Center in Boston, Massachusetts.

1. Be prepared. Don't rush into a project without careful preparation. Future Options Education often deals with "at risk" students who can be easily discouraged and hurt.

2. Be organized. Programs, especially large ones, need tight organization. It is helpful to give coordinators the necessary time, materials and reimbursement for their efforts.

3. Evaluate. Build long and short term evaluations into the program. Use specific criteria in the process.

4. Use Existing Resources. Do not waste time in "reinventing the wheel."

5. Listen and Help. Consult parents, students, school counselors, community groups on what they want and how they want to receive it. Act as a catalyst and facilitator. Involve others in the significant work of the program.

6. Reach Parents. Recognize the importance of parents' attitudes. Develop materials and programs to help parents help their children.

7. Reach the Principal. Enlist the support of the school principal to make programs work.

8. Use Teachers. They can deliver important messages in their classrooms.

9. Use Peers. They can serve as convincing role models for success. They can act as mentors and/or tutors too.

10. Be Democratic. In school/college/business partnerships, make sure that all partners feel equal.

11. Be Persistent. Future Options Education requires long-term, dedicated effort.

12. Be Playful. Creative play is a good approach to motivate middle-grades youth towards effective study and interest in post-high-school options.

A PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE INITIATIVES:

As you move toward more comprehensive approaches, it is necessary to conduct more thorough planning. There is no one "correct" way to design and implement a Future Options Education initiative. These functions should be based upon local decisions and local needs. However, a general planning framework can increase the chances of a school developing an effective, manageable initiative over time. These steps include:

- ☐ Forming an initial planning team;
- ☐ Defining young people's Future Options needs;
- ☐ Setting goals;
- ☐ Determining interventions needed;
- ☐ Communicating this information to others;
- ☐ Inventorying available resources;
- ☐ Identifying which other people must be involved;
- ☐ Bringing in and orienting the players;
- ☐ Developing a plan of action;
- ☐ Implementing the plan; and
- ☐ Evaluating overall progress against plan.

Forming an initial planning team:

Regardless of size, a Future Options Education initiative will certainly cross departmental boundaries, and ideally should cross institutional boundaries. For individuals from different areas to work together, mutual agreement is needed on the problems or unmet needs. In the case of Future Options Education, the "problem" may be that many middle-grades youth are inadequately prepared for their futures.

For manageability, it may be good to start with a small number of school personnel organized at the building level, plus other interested "outside" individuals.

It is conceivable that Future Options Education will be viewed as one part of a larger school improvement effort; hence, this group might be part of a larger planning committee, or the initiative itself might be one agenda item for a school improvement planning committee. This initial planning team can chart the directions of the Future Options Education effort.

Defining students' Future Options needs:

Regardless of structure, this group must define the issues, and communicate those issues to other people. A first step might involve collecting and analyzing information drawn from sources such as:

- ☐ literature on middle-grades improvement, dropouts, career education, and other related information;
- ☐ descriptions of approaches others have used;
- ☐ interviews/surveys of staff/parents/students;
- ☐ status of local middle-grades students -- dropout rate, number moving on to college, promotion rates, etc.
- ☐ time-on-task audits;
- ☐ analysis of test scores;
- ☐ developmental issues and needs of young adolescents.

This information should be synthesized into a form that everyone can understand. Patterns of information that appear regularly across sources are especially important. This synthesis defines the real Future Options Education needs of local middle-grades students, and establishes a commonly-shared knowledge base.

Setting goals:

Another step is to decide the mission or purpose that will "drive" the Future Options Education initiative. In other words, "We know our students' needs, so how will we address them?" From this mission flows a set of goals that stem from the needs analysis.

Determining what interventions are needed:

The planning team determines which services, resources, and other activities or options might be needed by their students.

Throughout this process, it is important that the planning team try to develop a coordinated, logically-sequenced set of activities that fulfill each of the initiative's goals. This should not imply that a school must offer the entire gamut of activities described in this publication. Much of what we describe has been done in a "menu" approach that provides examples of how Future Options Education activities have or can be done -- but not necessarily how they should be done.

Communicating this information to others:

One way or another, background information about the Future Options Education initiative must be made available to a variety of people. An important vehicle for conveying such information is a short information-piece that clearly and succinctly imparts the "vision" behind the initiative, its target population, its mission, its goals, and its potential benefits.

Inventorying school and community resources:

The level of sophistication of any Future Options Education initiative ultimately rests upon an assessment of the school's ability to leverage and apply necessary resources. It would be futile to develop a complex plan of activities and interventions if neither the school nor the community have the capacity to carry out the plan.

It is appropriate, up front, to assess all tools and resources available through the school. This includes considering the capabilities of the school personnel and other individuals who deliver Future Options Education.

However, Future Options Education need not rely solely on the resources of the school. It does not need to be expensive, and does not require a large bureaucracy to implement. Much more can be delivered if one is willing to develop linkages with community resources outside of the school. There may be organizations or individuals in the community that already offer Future Options Education activities. The planning team may wish to conduct a survey to identify and locate these resources, learn of their availability and capacity, and so on.

Identifying other people who must be involved:

Just because resources exist in a community doesn't necessarily mean that the individuals who control them will be cooperative with the Future Options effort. In nearly all cases, it will be necessary to involve those people in the planning process. Soliciting that involvement may require considerable persuasion and negotiation.

The first step in this process is to identify individuals within the schools who are responsible for providing needed services, resources, and options. This includes persons who control or influence those services, resources, and options within the schools, such as the:

☐ state/local board of education
☐ state/local directors of curriculum development
☐ state/local directors of vocational education
☐ school superintendents
☐ assistant superintendents
☐ principals and assistant principals
☐ department heads
☐ "behind the scenes" in-school leaders
☐ PTAs or other parent councils
☐ parents

It also includes the people who deliver those services:

☐ teachers
☐ guidance counselors
☐ other support staff
☐ others in middle level schools
☐ staff in high schools

It also involves determining which persons control services, resources, and options among outside institutions. A general rule governing who to involve in any initiative that crosses departmental and institutional boundaries is that one should bring in as many players as possible from inside and outside the school. This includes parents and students.

Bringing in and orienting the key players:

Before approaching individuals to solicit their support or involvement, the planning team should analyze possible benefits of participation for each person or institution whose involvement is needed, and should develop a "sales pitch" that will be used to attract them.

The data supporting Future Options Education should be explained to all players, and they should be shown how the initiative will address the student needs set forth in that data. Players will also need to be oriented to what the planning team has done so far in developing the initiative.

The planning team will need to work with these new players to review, if necessary revise, and ratify the mission and goals. As part of the process of soliciting their involvement, they should be given the opportunity to provide input about their reactions to the initiative, and the ways in which they feel they might be able to help. In addition, they should be told what the planners had hoped they would do. A mutually agreed upon role satisfactory to all parties can then be negotiated. It is then possible to assemble those who are interested into a working group.

Developing a plan of action:

Creation of a comprehensive action plan will usually involve spending the time to answer questions such as:

☐ What are current school practices and structure pertaining to the target group?
☐ What changes are needed?
☐ What is the initiative now? (mission/goals)
☐ What gets done? (objectives)
☐ At what "level of quality?" (specifications)
☐ What barriers must be overcome?
☐ How will barriers be handled? (problem solving)
☐ Who makes decisions? Who will be held accountable and for what? Who will do which aspects of the work? (responsibility)
☐ When does work commence, and by when must work be completed? (schedule)
☐ Who is ultimately responsible for each aspect of it? (chain of authority)
☐ How will orientation and communications be handled? (communications)
☐ What should the initiative become? (long-range plan)
☐ Who will finance activities? (funding/budget)

Implementing the plan:

The plan will need to be communicated to everyone who will "touch" the initiative. It also sets the stage by which the expertise-needs of the initiative can be matched with individuals and/or institutions. Key players will need to identify peers and subordinates who will need to be involved, determine in what (implementing) capacity, and identify for how many hours each week and for how long a period. A common process for implementing the plan incorporates steps such as:

- ☐ sell the concept to these players, then orient and train them.
- ☐ determine working committees needed.
- ☐ choose who should serve on the working committees.
- ☐ convene, orient, and train members of working committees.
- ☐ have working committees develop their own mission, goals, objectives, and work plans -- congruent with the overall mission, goals, objectives, and plan.
- ☐ define what's known and build on what works.
- ☐ determine how known approaches can be adapted to make them fit a local Future Options Education initiative.
- ☐ determine how one will merge the above to plan a locally acceptable initiative within a middle level structure.
- ☐ stagger change, phasing it in when ready.
- ☐ oversee working committees.
- ☐ facilitate communication between players.

HOW MUCH DO FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES COST?

To assist schools in planning Future Options Education, the table that follows summarizes many activities by cost. A middle-grades school does not have to have substantial financial resources in order to organize and implement Future Options activities. On the other hand, significant funds make it possible for activities to be more varied and easier to sustain.

	Little/No $	**Modest$**	**Substantial $**
Classroom	Classroom workshops Teacher role models/ advisors Group guidance sessions	Paper/pencil career interest surveys	
Schoolwide	Early identification/ follow up of students Parent telephone support networks College Awareness Week College Clubs Post-secondary education information counselor	Mentoring programs Parent workshops PSAT test administration Educational planning Video lending library	Computerized guidance systems
Systemwide	Letters to parents from public figures High school fairs	Parent newsletters and publications College/career fairs Post-secondary education guidance curriculum	Scholarships dollars grades
Campus-Based		Campus visits	Educational enrichment programs Guaranteed tuition/ scholarship programs
Structured FOE Programs		See Chapter 2 for activities that introduce students to the world of work, post-secondary education, financing, etc.	

Related to the question of cost is the question of who pays for them. Because of the widespread recognition of the importance of early options awareness, particularly for low income and minority students, there are various funding sources to which public schools can turn for support.

Often support takes the form of in-kind contributions rather than cash. Post-secondary institutions and higher educational agencies often are willing to use their own funds to support staff members who organize and conduct activities and develop publications. Post-secondary institutions also assume the costs of campus visits with the exception of bus transportation. In addition, post-secondary institutions often have access to public and private sources of grant funding for educational enrichment programs. Grants from federal and state government agencies are primary sources to obtain funds for educational enrichment programs.

Another common source of funding is local corporations, particularly those paired with middle-grades schools as partners. Again, corporations are more apt to provide in-kind support, printing, refreshments, and meeting facilities, but they also underwrite costs of buses for company visits, campus visits and parent workshops. They are often amenable to providing guest speakers, mentors, and opportunities for "job shadowing."

Self-interest is an important factor motivating post-secondary institutions and corporations to provide support. They need students to maintain their enrollments, and educated workers to fill managerial and technical jobs. For this reason, school administrators should not hesitate to approach them.

CHAPTER 8

"SELLING" FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION TO OTHERS

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> *"Help me convince others that Future Options Education is needed. If our kids just had the same kind of education we had, they'd be just fine, wouldn't they?"*

No, they wouldn't. Times have changed. The world is a different place.

Unfortunately, most schools have remained the same while the economy and society have changed. The country's educational needs are greater. Schools that fail to change with this trend are schools that fail.

> *"O.K., I recognize the need for change. But give me the ammunition I need to mobilize my school, engage the community, marshal business support, and activate parents."*

THE FACTS OF WORKLIFE

FACT: The American Workforce is Changing:

A century ago, the United States had the most well-educated workforce in the world. Today, we lag behind several other developed nations, and others are gaining on us.

Our economy and the workplace are changing rapidly, and the pace of change is accelerating. The global nature of the marketplace and the upcoming European economic unification pressure American businesses to deliver greater quality, productivity and efficiency.

As we shift to a high-technology, manufacturing and service economy, the fastest growing jobs require much higher levels of knowledge and skills than were required in the past.

Product life-cycles are collapsing to shorter timeframes, making jobs quickly obsolete. Continuous re-skilling and life-long learning will increasingly be essential. In a word, American workers must be able to shift rapidly as foreign competition and technology eliminate some jobs while creating others.

Jobs themselves are changing in content and skill requirements. They demand less rote activity. They require more ability to analyze problems, work in teams, work with excessive or incomplete information, or ask pertinent questions. Rapid technological development and growing pressure of international competition will require workers to have computer literacy and well-developed, analytical problem-solving abilities. In short, our post-industrial, knowledge-based economy needs broadly, deeply educated workers who can think on their feet and learn on the job.

The level and types of education required are escalating, as is the importance of post-secondary education. Today, only 22 percent of all occupations require a college degree. However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an estimated 65 to 75 percent of new jobs created by the year 2000 will require some education beyond high school, and almost a third will be filled by college graduates. Post-secondary education also will be important for people's financial security. the likelihood of being poor falls sharply as education attainment rises. In Massachusetts, for instance, only 2.5 percent of people with Bachelor's degrees are poor as compared with 35 percent of people with 12 years or less education.

Our population growth rate is also declining; hence, smaller numbers of young people are entering the workforce. Of the new workers entering the labor force by the year-2000, 85 percent will be women, members of minority groups, or immigrants -- groups who we have traditionally not prepared well for the types of jobs that are growing the fastest.

If a larger proportion of a smaller pool of workers must be more highly educated, we encounter a serious mismatch between the qualifications of our workers and the demands of our economy.

These factors, combined with domestic deregulation, require a flexible and adaptable workforce. The day when hard work alone guaranteed a reasonable, steady income is past. Our young people are under-educated and increasingly unqualified to fill the jobs our (and the world) economy offers. This makes our nation less competitive.

FACT: There Is A Growing Need For Future Options Education:

For Employers:

Employers are already feeling the pinch. A 1989 survey of Fortune 500 companies indicated that 55 percent of responding industrial companies are having a problem finding workers with necessary basic educational skills, as are 62 percent of responding service companies. More than one-third of all responding companies indicated that they have found it necessary to offer employees remedial courses to improve reading, writing and math.

For Our Communities:

Recent statistics show that functional illiteracy is a key common denominator among at-risk populations: 68 percent of those arrested, 85 percent of unwed mothers, 79 percent of welfare dependents, 85 percent of school dropouts, and 72 percent of the unemployed are functionally illiterate.

The loss of wages, profits and productivity caused by the skills deficit has already cost businesses and taxpayers an enormous sum. Add to this the costs of unemployment and poverty, the loss of earnings and tax revenues, the costs of welfare dependency, crime, and other social costs. Every community's standard of living and international standing are at stake.

For Our Middle Grades Students:

Young people will need to learn how to communicate with co-workers and customers, verbally and in writing. They will need to know how to think critically, solve problems analytically, and innovate. They will be called upon to deal with complex technologies. They will have to possess a well-developed work ethic; and, most importantly, have the capacity for life-long learning. These are the skills essential to civic responsibility and personal fulfillment.

The message is clear. We must educate the "whole" child. We must find a way to show students what will be out there after high school, what skills will be needed, and how to prepare for the future.

FACT: We Need To Consider The Needs Of The Young Adolescents We Call "At-Risk:"

We need to go further with young adolescents who we define as "at-risk." They will require extra help to change their life trajectories.

One in four young people, an estimated seven million, can be considered "at-risk." These youth are extremely vulnerable to behaviors that move them toward crime, drug/alcohol abuse, pregnancy, school failure, and so on. Many come from dysfunctional home environments and/or crime-prone neighborhoods. They may be able to earn "big bucks" in the drug-trade, in contrast to "peanuts" through traditional means. It is not surprising that self-defeating behaviors are fueled, encouraged, and sustained.

Why should they bother focusing on their middle-grades education when they have so many other issues to cope with? What good is school anyway? What can we do to give them hope for a better future, and to relate school to that future?

FACT: We Can Start With The Way We Deal, In General, With Young Adolescents:

Child development theory, research in education and the social sciences, and the experience of employment and training programs all strongly suggest that the years of early adolescence (coinciding in formal American education with grades 6-9) are crucial to students' future opportunities.

Middle grades students are preoccupied with questions of identity, compare themselves with others, and form impressions of their future options. Their problems and perceptions may include low self-esteem, lack of role models, poor family situations, increasing availability of drugs, gang violence, and little understanding of the concept that knowledge can be power.

Growth and change are in the very cells of early adolescence. Yet, more often than not, middle-grades schools view the behaviors stemming from the energy inherent in this natural stage as an eruption to be suppressed. For example:

☐ We know that young adolescents need to try a wide variety of roles. Yet, to make them a manageable lot, we contain and limit them. We rarely expose them to the wide variety of adult roles.

☐ We know that young adolescents vary enormously in physical, mental, and emotional maturity, and in capability. Yet, in schools, chronologic age is still the overwhelming factor used in grouping students.

☐ We know that during early adolescence, the development of control over one's own life through conscious decisionmaking is crucial. Yet adults make nearly all meaningful decisions for almost all young adolescents -- almost all the time. Of course, we do give them the "freedom" to make "safe" decisions.

☐ We know that early adolescence is an age where natural forces (muscular, intellectual, glandular, emotional) are causing precipitous peaks and troughs. Yet we demand internal consistency.

☐ We know that young adolescents need space and experience to "be" different persons at different times. Yet we expect them to "be" what they said they were last week.

☐ We know that young adolescents are preoccupied by physical and sexual concerns, and are frightened by their perceived inadequacy. Yet we operate with them each day as if such concerns did not exist at all.

☐ We know that young adolescents need a distinct feeling of present importance, a present relevancy of their own lives now. Yet we place them in institutions called "junior high schools" which stress out-of-hand their subordinate status to their next maturational stage; and then, feed them a diet of watered down "real stuff"...

Adapted from: Joan Lipsitz in Growing Up Forgotten: A Review of the Research and Programs Concerning Early Adolescence, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1980, Chapter 2, Page 83.

WHICH STUDENTS SHOULD RECEIVE FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION?

FACT: We Can Offer Future Options Education To All Young Adolescents:

Variations of Future Options Education activities have been implemented successfully in middle-grades schools throughout the United States. While most are open to all students, some schools choose to target them to students from families with no previous post-secondary experience. In other cases, programs are restricted to students who need exposure and enrichment in order to be motivated to prepare for post-secondary education or training.

Regardless of what other schools have done, the targeting decision is up to you. We'd like to suggest that you change some basic premises. Maybe early adolescence can be viewed as a natural resource that can be cultivated.

We suggest that Future Options Education should corroborate a set of beliefs that many educational reformers and developmental psychologists have long held:

☐ We must treat as an asset the relentless curiosity of young teens;

☐ We must honor their drive to explore the world and make sense out of experience;

☐ We should encourage and channel their identification with their peer group;

☐ We must acknowledge that many young adolescents who have been labeled as "at-risk," "underachieving," or "disadvantaged" have the potential to enter and succeed in post-secondary education/training or "good" jobs.

As John H. Lounsbury has written: "Early adolescence is a particularly critical time in one's development. The self-concept which evolves then lasts through life with limited exceptions. Aptitudes and interests not discovered then may lay dormant for life. Therefore, exploratory experiences during the middle level years have tremendous importance. In fact, the entire curriculum should be approached in an exploratory mode. Occupational education, at this level, should not be job specific. This is not the time to 'choose a career and develop a notebook on it.' Rather, it is a time to assess one's self, the world of work, and the personal attributes important to all careers."

CHAPTER 9

EVALUATING FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION INITIATIVES

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"One more question before we get to the end of this publication. How will we know how well we are doing in implementing Future Options Education in our school? Give us a measuring stick so we can assess our own progress in achieving Future Options Education for our students."

There are no hard and fast measures for assessing your Future Options Education interventions. Rather, since each school's approach and methods will vary, assessments will need to be hand tailored to the individual situations. However, having said that, there are a few "givens" in performing any evaluation:

ARE FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION STRATEGIES EFFECTIVE?

The success of activities that stimulate students to pursue higher education has been documented in terms of what students like and don't like about them, how much students know before and after their participation, and whether more students made the transition from middle-grades to high school than would have otherwise. To this point, results are positive.

However, because these activities for middle-grades students are a new phenomenon, there is, as yet, little concrete evidence that participation in such activities guarantees that students who participate will actually enroll in post-secondary programs more frequently than students who do not participate.

On the job-related end of Future Options Education, little is known. For the most part, career education and employment programs for middle graders have been watered-down versions of high school approaches. There needs to be significantly more attention devoted to designing curricula and experiences that are age- and stage- appropriate for young adolescents. Indeed, stimulating this work is one purpose of this handbook.

This should not imply that Future Options Education approaches don't work. Rather, it is a statement that few programs have initiated studies following participants in these activities from eighth grade through high school graduation. Studies of this sort are critical if financial support for Future Options programs is to be continued or increased in the future.

Studies also are needed to determine kinds of activities that produce the best results in terms of increased enrollment in post-secondary education and training and/or employment in skilled jobs.Evaluation should be considered a standard component in any Future Options Education initiative. A periodic evaluation will show the efficiency and effectiveness of the effort, in terms of both process and outcome. Evaluation reveals what works best, and what is less successful, and why. Lessons learned through the evaluation can help refine the plan, stimulate operational changes, and improve the quality of the effort.

HOW SHOULD WE EVALUATE OUR FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION EFFORTS?

First, you start by reviewing your progress toward your original goals. What did you set out to do? How far did you get? What stood in the way? How did you address these obstacles? This will be a process and a management review to determine how your efforts may be strengthened and improved during the next year.

Second, you examine the results of your efforts, for the school, for the community, and most important, for the young adolescents and their families.

In this chapter we review three categories of evaluation:

☐ Are We Doing Future Options Education?
("Do we have the right pieces?")

☐ Do We Have A Quality Initiative?
("Is it high content, high expectations, high support?")

☐ Is It Working?
("Are students benefitting from the Future Options efforts?")

Following is a tool, a general questionnaire, to help you analyze your progress.

EVALUATING FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION IN YOUR SCHOOL/COMMUNITY

Are We Doing Future Options Education?

This aspect of evaluation focuses primarily on management and process. It investigates whether a school has put together the necessary pieces to create a Future Options Education initiative. The questions to be answered in a process evaluation should relate directly back to the goals and objectives of the school's Future Options Education initiative. The evaluation might address questions such as:

Are we assuring high support by providing personal adult help to each student?

( ) Do we offer some vehicle(s) through which at least one knowledgeable adult (trained parent, primary advisor, mentor, etc.) is always available to assist each student with his/her personal goals?

( ) Do we acknowledge uniqueness by assessing each student at the outset?

( ) Do we assist each student to identify unique strengths, talents, interests, weaknesses, and barriers?

( ) Do we communicate the value of, recognize, and reward qualities that contribute to success in any endeavor (such as persistence, cooperation, honesty, resourcefulness, etc.)?

( ) Do we design activities, interventions, and curricula to address, influence, or enhance those factors?

Are we stimulating high expectations and ambitious future thinking by inspiring our students to consider what can be achieved after high school?

( ) Do we expose students to a variety of "horizon broadening" experiences?

( ) Are we enabling students to discover skills and interests they didn't know they had?

( ) Are we encouraging students to consider a college education, vocational training, and/or skilled jobs to be attainable post-high-school goals?

Are we relating the present to the future by helping students see how the middle-grades are important to their future options?

( ) Are we motivating students to stay in school and making their experience meaningful?

( ) Are we relating academic subjects to each other and to the realities of students' current lives and the broader world?

( ) Are we showing the relationships between middle-grades education, secondary school education, vocational education, post-secondary education, and a better future?

( ) Are we demonstrating how academic and personal choices made during the middle-grades years can broaden or limit a student's later options?

Are we charting and implementing the road to the future by helping students set and achieve ambitious goals?

( ) Are we helping each student to develop a written Future Options Plan?

( ) Are we enabling students to understand what it takes to advance from where they are to where they want to go?

( ) Are we providing an ongoing series of comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate interventions that are coordinated across activities?

( ) Are we providing the supports and guidance students need to achieve their goals over time?

( ) Are we offering opportunities for students to learn the skills they need to achieve their goals?

( ) Are we preparing middle-grades students to enter a high school program that maximizes their chances of success?

( ) Have we set up a system through which each student is supported with his/her Future Options plan during the secondary school years?

Do We Have A Quality Initiative?

It's not enough to determine whether a process, activity, or intervention is offered. One must also evaluate its quality.

We have drawn upon the work of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Joan Lipsitz (Successful Schools For Young Adolescents) to guide us as we consider the developmental needs of young adolescents. For effective, quality programming to occur, our evaluation needs to ask questions such as:

Are we offering students structure and clear limits?

( ) Do we provide students with clear limits, and consistent discipline tied to those limits?

( ) Do we provide security through clear rules?

( ) Do we offer students input into rule formation?

Are we offering a diverse array of interventions?

( ) Are interventions interesting and fun;

( ) Do interventions base instructional strategies not on passive listening to lectures; but rather on discussions, activity-oriented learning, and cooperative learning?

( ) Does curriculum relate a diverse, detailed, multi- experientially-based course-load to everyday situations and career possibilities?

( ) Does instruction use multiple and culturally-diverse resources?

( ) Do we help students see connections and transferrable skills between subjects and disciplines?

( ) Does instruction incorporate activities that involve tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory perceptions?

( ) Do we promote basic skills development, integrating the use of basic and vocational skills?

( ) Does instruction promote critical thinking abilities and facilitate higher order thinking skills?

( ) Are we providing opportunities for physical activity?

Are we offering students the opportunity for self-exploration and definition?

( ) Do interventions induce students to broaden interests by trying new things?

( ) Do we assist students to develop sound judgement to make decisions about difficult situations they face every day so that they can make choices that are not self-destructive?

( ) Do we offer guidance activities to help students develop aspirations and motivation for opportunities beyond high school and encourage them to consider all choices?

Are we instilling students with a sense of competence and achievement?

( ) Does our school offer a climate that honors inquiry?

( ) Does instruction stress practical knowledge (not the same thing as basic skills)?

( ) Does our scheduling system allow adequate time spent on academic tasks?

( ) Do we provide a success-oriented atmosphere?

( ) Do classes provide an environment where competition is fair?

( ) Do we use, whenever possible, individualized and small- group instructional materials and practices?

Are we encouraging meaningful participation in school and community?

( ) Does our school use instruction and opportunities to help students develop a commitment to social and life values?

( ) Do teachers attempt to make curriculum rich with meaning, and concept-based?

Are we incorporating positive social interaction with adults & peers?

( ) Does instruction enable students to work together in groups and encourage participatory skills?

( ) Does instruction incorporates peer teaching and cooperative learning techniques?

( ) Does instruction utilize a supportive peer culture?

( ) Is the school environment person-oriented rather than rule-oriented?

( ) Does the Future Options Education initiative use parents, teachers, community volunteers, and others as mentors and/or advisors?

Are we spurring students on to strive for their full potential?

( ) Does our staff confront and reject common misconceptions such as that academic ability is fixed very early and is largely unchangeable?

( ) Do our teachers and administrators truly believe that all students should and can learn?

( ) Do we challenge students to do things they don't think they can do?

( ) Do we have a system that regularly helps students grasp where they are, where they're capable of being, where they're expected to be, and how they're going to get there?

( ) Do students' Future Options Plans incorporate a vision, milestones, and regular wins enroute?

( ) Is the initiative designed to build strengths rather than focusing upon remediating problems?

( ) Do staff send a consistent message stressing that "everyone needs help sometime" -- removing stigma from seeking assistance?

( ) Is staff careful not to treat students who need help as if they were "damaged goods?"

( ) Do teachers avoid public comparisons of students' abilities?

( ) Does the staff regularly recognize student achievements, incorporating positive feedback, incentives, and awards?

Is Our Approach Working?

Finally, and most importantly, is the Future Options Education effort helping the students aspire and achieve, and producing positive outcomes in terms of higher education, vocational training, and quality jobs? This final portion of the evaluation focuses on student outcomes.

This facet of the evaluation might compare students who participate in Future Options Education activities with those who don't by asking questions such as:

Are we keeping students in school?

☐ How many drop out of the middle-grades? high school?

☐ Is there any effect on attendance and truancy rates?

☐ What is the rate of grade retention? suspensions?

Are we helping students improve achievement in school?

☐ How many pass courses that will give them access to a full range of options/courses when they reach high school?

☐ What percentages move out of remedial programs?

☐ What percentages advance from a lower track to a higher track?

☐ What percentage of students are enrolled in honors courses?

☐ How many students enter "college track" courses in high school?

Are we helping students to meet the goals set out in their Future Options Plan?

☐ Does each student have a Plan?

☐ Is each student fulfilling all, or at least a significant number of, his/her personal goals?

☐ Are there patterns of goals that are consistently not being fulfilled?

Are students pursuing post-secondary education, vocational training, and/or primary labor market jobs?

☐ How many students eventually graduate from high school?

☐ How many students eventually attend college?

☐ How many students attend some other form of post-secondary education or skills-training?

☐ How many students eventually obtain skilled jobs?

As a Future Options Education initiative evolves, builds momentum, and matures; new issues will regularly surface, gaps in services will appear, and priorities will shift. It is likely that the original design will have to be altered in light of evaluation data or new conditions. To handle this, planning and evaluation must be ongoing processes.

CONCLUSION

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Future Options Education is appropriate for any middle-grades school. Of course, schools might begin their planning at different points, depending on what activities, programs, and supports are already in place. Our observation is that Future Options Education is happening day in and day out, but it requires a more systematic approach.

Future Options Education is an emerging knowledge base. We hope that this publication will stimulate schools that are already doing portions of Future Options Education to share their successes with us and with other educators who could benefit from the experiences of other practitioners.

We hope that practitioners will add to the material provided in this publication for future use. Both the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Brandeis University have a continuing interest in learning about best practices and disseminating them for others.

Finally, we hope that we have begun an interactive, iterative process, through which knowledge can be developed and effective practices can be shared more broadly. To this end, we would encourage readers to stay in touch with us, by correspondence and by telephone.

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APPENDIX

FUTURE OPTIONS
EDUCATION
RESOURCES

APPENDIX:

FUTURE OPTIONS EDUCATION RESOURCES

This chapter contains an **inventory of project resource materials** organized into the following categories:

- Newsletters
- Reports, Studies, Guides and Handbooks
- Program Descriptions

These materials are relevant to Future Options Education, and will provide further information and assistance in providing Future Options Education for middle school youth.

NEWSLETTERS

Academy News, Academy for Educational Development (AED), 1255 Twenty-third Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 862-1900 (published three times per year).

Common Focus, Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, N.C., 27510.

The CREMS Report, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Carolina Street, Baltimore, MD, 21218, (301) 338-7570.

Employment and Training Reporter, Manpower Information Inc., P.O. Box 830430, Birmingham, AL, 35283-0430, (800) 633-4931.

High Strides: The Bimonthly Report on Urban Middle Grades, Education Writers Association, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Middle School Newsletter, Florida League of Middle Schools, 1515 Pine Ridge Road, Naples, FL, 33942.

National Center on Education and Employment (NCEE) Brief, National Center on Education and Employment, Box 174, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, (212) 678-3091.

Network, (A bi-monthly devoted to parent involvement in public schools), National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE), 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD, 21044.

Public/Private Ventures News, Public Private Ventures, 399 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, (215) 592-9099.

Report on Education Research, Capitol Publications, Inc. (CPI), 1101 King Street, Alexandria, VA, 22313-2053.

The State Board Connection: Issues in Brief, National Association of State Boards of Education, 1012 Cameron Street, Alexandria, VA, 22313-2053.

STEPS, National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 100 Boylston Street, Suite 737, Boston, MA, 02116-4610.

STREAMS, Youth Service America, 1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C., 20004, (202) 783-8855.

REPORTS, STUDIES, GUIDES AND HANDBOOKS

A Sampler of Early Higher Education Awareness Programs, Higher Education Information Center, The Boston Library, 666 Boylston Street, Boston, MA, 02116, (617) 536-0200

Assessing Excellence: A Guide for Studying The Middle Level, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA, 22091.

Before It's Too Late: Dropout Prevention in the Middle Grades, Ann Wheelock & G. Dorman, Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 76 Summer Street, Boston, MA, 02110, (617) 357-8431.

Catalog on Global Future Skills, National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, University of South Florida, College of Education EDU-115, Tampa, FL, 33620.

Certainty of Opportunity, (A report on the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA/ACE) symposium on early awareness of post secondary education), July, 1989, NASFAA, 1920 L Street, N.W., Suite 2001 Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 785-0453.

Charles W. Eliot Junior High School: The Dilemma of School Improvements in the Cities, June 1987, (The difficulties encountered with resistance to change by the school, especially from faculty, staff, and parents), Urban Middle School Reform, Faculty of Educational Studies, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY, 14260, (716) 636-3160.

Choices (A teen woman's journal for self-awareness and personal planning -- accompanying instructor's guide), 1984, Girl's Club of Santa Barbara, Inc., 531 E. Ortega Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93103.

Choices and Changes, (A curricular approach to economics education to help at-risk students), The Joint Council on Economic Education, 432 Park Avenue, South, New York, NY, 10016, (212) 685-5499.

Community Service for Young Adolescents: A Background Paper, (The importance of community service for young adolescents), by Joan Schine, June, 1989, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 11 Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Connections: Linking Youths with Caring Adults -- Mentoring, September 1989, Urban Strategies Council, Thornton House, 672 13th Street, Oakland, CA, 94612, (415) 893-2404.

Dynamite in the Classroom: A How To Handbook For Teachers, by S. Schurr, 1989, National Middle Schools Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, OH, 43229.

Education for Employment (An education for employment plan covering grades K-12), 1989, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 964 Educational Science Building, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI, 53706.

Everybody Gets An "A" In Affective Education, Or How To Set Up An Advisory Program Or Keep One Going, (A trainer's manual by S. Schurr, K.C. Hunt, and K Skewey, 1988), National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, University of South Florida, College of Education, EDU-115, Tampa, FL, 33620.

Exploratory Expos, (Series of exercises for exploratory curricula, by K. LaMorte, S. Lewis, and S. McLean, 1987), National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, University of South Florida, College of Education, EDU-115, Tampa, FL, 33620.

Higher Education Information Center 1988 Progress Report, Higher Education Information Center, Boston Public Library, 666 Boyleston Avenue, Boston, MA, 02116, (617) 536-0200.

Improving Educational Opportunities for Pregnant and Parenting Students (Urban Schools), Academy for Educational Development, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10011.

Improving Middle Schools: What Works (A summary report of the 1986 conference), The Regional Lab for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, New York Assistance Center, 680 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10019.

Let's Investigate! A Self-Study Instructional Package For Middle Grades Teachers On The Design And Implementation Of Investigation Task Cards, (A trainer's manual by S.L. Schurr, 1987, National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, University of South Florida, College of Education, EDU-115, Tampa, FL, 33620.

Making The Middle Grades Work, (the elements that impact improved quality grade promotion or assure high school graduation), September 1989, Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street, N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20001.

The Middle School Years (A handbook for parents on how to assess middle schools and how to effect change, by N. Berla, A. Henderson, and W. Kerewsky, 1989), National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MD, 21044, (301) 997-9300.

National Middle School Association Publications, National Middle School Association, 4807 Evanswood Drive, Columbus, OH, 43229-6292, (614) 848-8211.

Middle School Research: Selected Studies, by David B. Strahan, 1988 Edition.

Improving School Success With At Risk Middle School Students: Evaluating the Effects of a Decision-Making Course, by Mr. O'Sullivan, 1988.

Advisor-Advisee Programs: Why, What and How, by Michael James, 1986.

Evidence for the Middle School, by Paul S. George and Lynn L. Oldaker, 1985.

Guidance in Middle Level Schools: Everyone's Responsibility, by Claire G. Cole, Revised, 1988.

Involving Parents in Middle Level Education, by John W. Myers, 1985.

A Journey Through Time: A Chronology of Middle Education Resources, by Edward J. Lawton, 1989.

Long-Term Teacher-Student Relationships: A Middle School Case Study, by Paul S. George, with Melody Spreul and Jane Moorefield, 1987.

The Middle School in Profile: A Day in the Seventh Grade, by John H. Lounsbury, Jean V. Marani, and Mary F. Compton, 1980.

What Research Says to the Middle Level Practitioner, by J. Howard Johnson and Glenn C. Markle, 1986.

When the Kids Come First: Enhancing Self-Esteem, by James A. Beane and Richard P. Lipka, 1987.

Young Adolescent Development and School Practices: Promoting Harmony, by John Van Hoose and David Strahan, 1988.

Nowhere To Turn: The Crisis in Middle School Guidance and Support, by L. Yanis and R. Willner, August 1988.

Quality Criteria for the Middle Grades: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study and Program Quality Review, Part IV: The Quality Criteria, 1988, California Department of Education, Sacramento, CA, (916) 445-4688.

Reorganizing The Middle Grades: Guidelines for Administrator, School Boards, and Planning Teams, by J.A. Molitor and R.A. Dentler, 1982, Abt Associates, Inc., 55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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The Bridge Project, (A school-based dropout prevention demonstration program), Public/Private Ventures, 399 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, (215) 592-9099.

Career Beginnings: Helping Disadvantaged Youth Achieve Their Potential, William Bloomfield, Brandeis University, Center for Corporate & Education Initiatives, 60 Turner Street, Waltham, MA, 02254.

City Year (Urban Peace Corps Program), 120 Tremont Street, Suite 201, Boston, MA, 02108, (617) 451-0699.

The Early Adolescent Helper Program, (A school-community-university after-school service program), City University of New York Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036, (212) 642-2947 or (212) 719-9066.

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Eureka (A 13-15-year-old girls enrichment program that combines science, math and computers with athletic activities, 1989), Women's Center, Brooklyn College, City University of New York (CUNY), Bedford Avenue & Avenue H, Brooklyn, New York, (718) 780-5485.

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National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship To Disadvantaged and Handicapped Youth (NFTE), 1989 Projects, NFTE National Headquarters, 171 West 23rd Street, Suite #4C, New York, NY, 10011, (212) 633-8444.

One With One, (A career exploration program involving parents and mentors), Boys' Club of America, Career Exploration Program, 771 First Avenue, New York, NY, 10017, (212) 351-5920.

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Prime Time, (Advisory program curricula and teacher's guide, Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, Florida, 1985), National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, University of South Florida, College of Education EDU-115, Tampa, FL, 33620.

RAISE, (A student support program in Baltimore), Fund for Educational Excellence, 616D North Eutaw Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, (301) 685-8300/8301.

3:00 to 6:00 PM: Planning Programs For Young Adolescents, Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Sacramento, CA.

Urban Middle School Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program, Academy for Educational Development, Inc., 100 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10011, (212) 243-1110.

The Way Out: Student Exclusion Practices in Boston Middle Schools (A model dropout prevention program), The Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 76 Summer Street, Boston, MA, 02110, (617) 357-8431.

ABOUT THE EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION

Making sure that today's disadvantaged youth have an opportunity to pursue future career and post-secondary options is one of the most important challenges facing the nation's middle and junior high schools. Among the leaders responding to this challenge is the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation through their Program for Disadvantaged Youth's Middle Grades Initiative.

The core of the initiative is a multi-year, educational restructuring and improvement grant to five urban school systems selected from across the country. Locally designed projects targeted to benefit disadvantaged students are underway at selected middle and/or junior high schools in Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland and San Diego. The project defines disadvantaged as students who are low achievers or who come from families near or at the poverty level. The Clark Foundation considers such students to be at a disadvantage because they are disproportionately at-risk for dropping out of school, for graduating "undereducated", or for not continuing their education beyond high school.

Building upon the Foundation's theme of a **high content, high expectations, and high support** approach to learning, each of the schools hopes to achieve a common set of objectives despite differences in local strategies. According to the program description, "high expectations for learning, or increased performance outcomes for all children, can be achieved by offering them a high content, relevant, challenging curriculum which stimulates critical thinking and is taught through appropriate pedagogical strategies in a highly supportive school environment." Outcomes for students include remaining in school and completing middle-grades on time, mastery of critical thinking skills, and improved self-esteem and self-efficacy resulting from supportive interactions with adults. Upon entering high school, students are also expected to have an understanding of "how different curriculums can affect their career and/or post-secondary education options, and they will select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices."

One unique feature of the Middle Grade Initiative is the availability of technical assistance from a number of national organizations who are engaged in related middle school projects also supported by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Among the organizations that the five school systems can call upon are:

The Center for Early Adolescence, specialists in effective middle school practices and exemplary programs, will publish a technical assistance bulletin for all project teachers and will hold bi-annual conferences for representatives from the five school systems.

The Education Writers Association publishes High Strides, a bimonthly newsletter which profiles urban middle-grades schools, programs, people and research engaged in activities related to the project's themes and objectives.

The National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) is available to assist the project schools in increasing parent and citizen involvement in the schools. One recent NCCE publication related to parental involvement is The Middle School Years: The Parents' Handbook.

The Association of Junior Leagues is working on a major initiative under this project, the Middle School Improvement Program. They will coordinate their efforts with each of the five school systems.

The Center for Corporate Community Relations at Boston College is working with corporations and businesses in the five cities to encourage and assist them in focusing more resources on the project schools.

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education is developing a three-day Institute for Teacher Leadership in Increasing High Content for Disadvantaged Youth which will be available to selected teachers from each of the five project cities.

The Early Adolescent Helper Project, based in New York City, will visit each city to provide information and technical assistance on middle school community service programs.

In addition, the Clark Foundation has also supported other national organizations who are conducting a wide variety of research and development projects related to middle-grades improvement.

For more information on the Middle Grades Initiative and related projects, contact:

M. Hayes Mizell, Director
Program for Disadvantaged Youth
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
250 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10177

ABOUT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY'S CENTER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

The Center for Human Resources at Brandeis University's Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies is interested in the relationships between economic productivity, income support and human resource development policies and practices. This set of interrelated interests has led to an active agenda of policy research, evaluations, program demonstration and assistance, and management training in several fields, including welfare reform, youth employment and education, employee benefits and the human resource policies and practices of governments and industry. Among its activities are the following:

Employee Benefits Program. Funded by private business, this program offers three courses in employer-sponsored social welfare (benefits). It edits the quarterly Journal: Compensation and Benefits Management and does research on a variety of benefits issues including prefunding of post-employment health insurance, book reserving, federal benefits tax policy and the role of the private sector in social welfare.

Program Assistance in Youth Employment. Funded by an informal consortium of national foundations, the U.S. Department of Labor, and several state government agencies, the Center provides a variety of services to the foundations, government agencies and to state and local managers of youth employment and education programs. The Center staff provides extensive technical assistance and management training to teams of professionals, school and industry managers from more than thirty cities and nearly every state. Finally, through articles, speeches, seminars, publications, the periodic newsletters Youth Programs, and a toll-free '800' line, the Center makes its experience and research material broadly available to the field of youth employment and education professionals. In this effort, over 8,000 persons are contacted yearly.

The New Futures Institute. This major new program supports the Annie E. Casey Foundation's New Futures Initiative, a five-year, $60 million program in U.S. cities designed to reduce the incidence of early pregnancy, school dropouts, and unemployment among disadvantaged teenagers. Working with youth beginning at age twelve, the initiative seeks to encourage cities to build city-wide, collaborative efforts to intervene early in the lives of young people in a preventive strategy. The Center has assisted in development of these strategies and will now develop and manage the staff development and technical assistance activities in the participating cities.

The Smokey House Project. In conjunction with the Taconic Foundation, and their Smokey House Project, a 5,000 acre working farm and youth development project, the Center is developing a training and retreat facility for professionals in the fields of youth employment and education. A former barn has been beautifully renovated as a training center, and the first six-week long residential programs are being offered there in the 1989-90 period.

The Career Beginnings Program. The "Career Beginnings" Program grants from three national foundations, the Commonwealth Fund, The MacArthur Foundation and the Gannett Foundation, as well as several community foundations, support 24 colleges around the nation in a six million dollar program to assist high school juniors from poor families in making a better transition to work or to higher education. Grants from the Commonwealth Fund support the Center's management and ongoing assessment of the operations of the program, as well as training and technical assistance activities. Now in its fourth year, the Career Beginnings Program is testing the concept of combining summer and year-round employment for high school youth with adult "mentoring" by business and community volunteers. It is hoped that these services, in a college setting, will aid more than 10,000 poor youth in planning for their futures after high school graduation. Beginning in 1990, the Career Beginnings Program and related activities are relocated in a new Brandeis organization, The Center for Corporate and Education Initiatives.

The Los Angeles Employment Competencies Program. The City of Los Angeles has contracted for the Center's assistance in thoroughly reorganizing their youth employment programs by establishing competency goals for disadvantaged participants. The Center has been working for the past five years with the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Private Industry Council of business leaders and 20 contracted agencies to redesign their programs in line with learning goals recommended by industry and local educators. For the Center, the Los Angeles work has represented an ideal "laboratory" for testing research-based concepts of youth employment in real life.

Research and Evaluation Activities. Center researchers are evaluating the Quantum Opportunities Project (QOP) for the Ford Foundation. QOP is a multi-year demonstration of year-round services, including computer-based education, and special financial incentives for high school students from poverty backgrounds in five cities. Another project, for the Rockefeller Foundation, has Center researchers monitoring the implementation of six cities' efforts to develop community planning and action capacities in response to growing underclass conditions in the cities.